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SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

TODAY

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Hackles rise over 'no tartan tax'

Blair accused of insulting the Scots

By Gillian Bowditch, Arthur Leathley and Philip Webster

TONY BLAIR suffered his worst day of the election campaign so far yesterday after comparing Labour's proposed Scottish parliament to an English parish council and banning it from raising taxes for at least five years.

Travelling north to rally his Scottish troops, Mr Blair further upset his hosts by saying that if Labour were elected, sovereignty would remain with Westminster and with "me as an English MP".

John Major exploited Mr Blair's tough reception by claiming that the Labour campaign was falling apart. "The moment they are asked questions in detail they don't know the answers," he said. "They can produce slogans, fine words and the soft smiles but when it comes to hard substance which determines what government is really about, they fall to pieces."

The Prime Minister also rewrote his speech for his Albert Hall campaign rally last night to concentrate on Labour's discomfort. He claimed that Mr Blair's shift on devolution was a sign of untrustworthiness on other policies, and he predicted daily changes of stance as Labour's programme was put to the test.

He told 2,000 Tory activists: "Mr Blair both insults Scotland and breaks the promise he has given them for a long time. This is a man who only yesterday asked people to trust him. What a fall is here — from powerhouse to parish council in a soft phrase too many from the Labour leader. Not a minor matter of detail. It strikes at the heart of the United Kingdom itself."

But Mr Blair's aides professed satisfaction with the day's events, saying he had spent all day winning the headlines for making plain that the Scots would face no tax increases under Labour.

However, his announcement that a Scottish Parliament would not be able to use its tax-raising powers — while doing no more than bringing Scotland into line with his pledge for the rest of Britain — inevitably raised questions about why he was giving it the powers in the first place.

Under Labour proposals, the parliament would have the ability to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p in the pound. But *The Times* disclosed last year that Mr Blair would not allow it to raise taxes, a report vigorously denied by his aides.

Yesterday Mr Blair confirmed for the first time that that was the case, but said that having the power to raise tax did not mean that it would be used. Becoming increasingly tetchy with journalists who questioned him about the apparent inconsistency, he insisted: "Having a power is not the same as using that power. The Labour Party is committed to not raising the basic and top rates of income tax. That commitment applies in Scotland as much as it applies in the rest of the UK."

Mr Blair's words about sovereignty were also certain to raise Scottish hackles, even though constitutionally, the Westminster Parliament would remain sovereign after devolution. In March 1989 every Scottish Labour MP except Tam Dalyell signed a document entitled the "Claim of Right" which acknowledged "the sovereign right of the Scottish people".

Yesterday Mr Blair flatly contradicted that document by saying: "Sovereignty remains with Westminster that is why it is devolution. That is the constitutional fact. Devolution is the sensible third way between the Tories' policy of no change and the lunatic separatism of the SNP."

Scottish sensibilities were further enraged by an article in *The Scotsman* in which the Labour leader appeared to liken the tax-raising powers of

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MARC HILL

Joe Tizzard preparing yesterday to chase Grand National fortune with the country's leading jump jockeys. "You can't stop to think about the risks"

Young blood jumps at chance of National glory

By Rob Hughes

JOE TIZZARD, the 17-year-old son of a Dorset dairy farmer, will attempt to become the youngest Grand National winner for 60 years today.

With his 16-year-old girlfriend Caroline Tuffin and his parents in tow, he arrives straight out of school with nine GCSEs, a full set of teeth — which is uncommon among National Hunt jockeys — and the philosophy: "If you think about ending up in a wheelchair, you would never get on a horse."

Tizzard's birthday is December 13. If he were to win on the 66-1 outsider Straight Talk, he would be the second youngest National winner this century, two weeks older than Bruce Hobbs, who won on Battleship, in 1938.

The Grand National, apart from its 30 fearsome fences and gruelling effect on the limbs and nerves of the country's most hardened jump jockeys, apparently holds no trepidation for Tizzard. He left school in the summer and, when not being brought down to earth milking the 180 Fresian cows on his parents' farm at Milborne Port, or shovelling manure, he dreams of keeping his weight down and chasing the achievements of his grandfather Dick Nettley, who saddled Loving Words, which took third in the 1982 National. When Joe was a year old, he was put on the family pony, and insisted on riding around in his grandfather's colours.

The Jockey Club granted the young amateur special dispensation to ride with the 38 competitors in respect for his seven victories under rules and 17 wins in point-to-point races, in which his father Colin is a trainer.

The owner, trainer and backers of Straight Talk all describe Tizzard as an able and gifted horseman beyond his years.

Undismayed by the fact that on his last visit to Aintree Straight Talk, a ten-year-old bay gelding, unseated Tony McCoy, arguably the leading National Hunt jockey of the day, Tizzard describes his race plan. "I shall drive up to Aintree with my father in the morning, then walk the course," he says confidently. "In the race, I'm hoping to creep through the field and take the lead in the final third ... You can't stop to think about the risks."

Alas, not everyone will be cheering for him. A mystery punter who placed a bet of £76,000 with William Hill in London, stands to win £550,000 if Wylde Hide wins at 16-1.

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Ashdown plea for the 'can-do' spirit

By Our Political Editor

PADDY ASHDOWN rejected suggestions that a Liberal Democrat vote would be wasted yesterday as he promised fresh spending on education and health, financed by an extra penny on income tax and a new top rate of 50p.

Launching his party's manifesto Mr Ashdown said: "A Liberal vote is not a wasted vote if you want more investment in your kid's school, if you want more investment to solve the crisis in the hospitals. A Liberal Democrat vote is the only vote you have got.

"It's not a wasted vote in those 150 seats where the Liberal Democrat is the only alternative to the Conservatives."

Putting the cost of his policies at 45p a week for the average taxpayer, he added: "If you don't think 45p is worth it to make sure your kid gets a decent education to prepare us for the future; that we don't have to sack all those teachers that are being sacked at present year after year; that your child doesn't have to be in a class of 40 or more; to make sure they don't have to use photocopiers to study in the evening; that they have access to computers to prepare us for the future, the answer is simple — don't vote for us.

"We are told that nothing can be done. That it has to be like this. It doesn't have to be like this. We've got to break the fatalism of our politics. We've got to get this country's 'can-do' spirit back and there is nothing we cannot achieve."

Manifesto details, page 13

Boning up on the evolutionary scale

By Nigel Hawkes, science editor

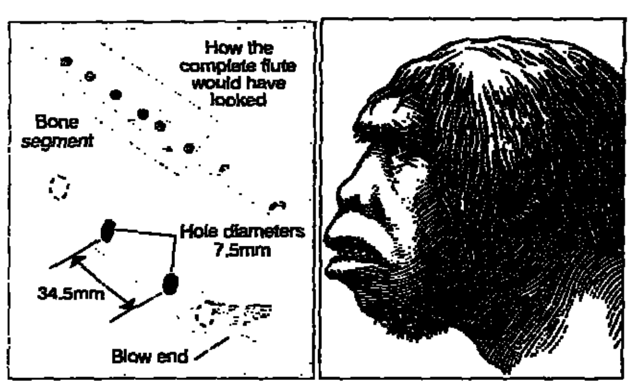
NEANDERTHAL Man could play sweet music, according to an analysis of the oldest known musical instrument, a flute made from the thigh bone of a bear.

The flute was found in a cave in Slovenia, and dated to between 43,000 and 67,000 years ago — at least 10,000 years older than any previously known instrument.

The bone, less than four inches long, contains two neatly-drilled holes and the traces of two more at its broken ends. Now Bob Fink, a Canadian musicologist, has worked out the notes the flute could play when it was complete.

He concludes that the instrument is based on the same seven-note scale used in modern Western music. The flute as it survives could play four notes (Mi, Fa, Soh and Lah) in a minor key.

In its original form it would have been about 15 inches long and capable of playing the entire scale. He has made a flute matching the pattern of holes found in the bone, and found that when played it confirmed the analysis.



The bone flute: sweet music from Neanderthal Man

The results are striking because Neanderthals are generally considered to have been uncultured humans with no language and no art. If confirmed, they cast a new light on their behaviour.

Neanderthals first appeared about 200,000 years ago and disappeared 30,000 years ago. Most experts now believe that they were a dead-end in human evolution, an offshoot that did not evolve into modern man but was eventually replaced by him.

The results also suggest, in Mr Fink's view, that the notion of harmony is "hard-wired" into the human brain, not something that is learnt. This view, which is opposed by many musicologists, is backed by research showing that babies react differently to a pair of harmonious notes played together than they do to a pair of discordant notes.

The section of flute was found in July 1995 by Slovenian archaeologist Dr Ivan Turk alongside other Neanderthal artefacts. Teeth and soil from the same layer of earth in which the flute was found were dated by Dr Bonnie Blackwell of Queens College in New York.

She concluded it was at least 43,000 years old and possibly as old as 67,000 years.

She acknowledged that the holes could have been made by an animal but added: "It would be pretty surprising to have an animal make them in such a straight line".

Dr Turk said: "The flute reinforces the basic humanness of the Neanderthals. I can't imagine a group having conscious music without having language."

Why the cereal fillers have more get up and go

By Jeremy Laurance
Health correspondent

THE ideal breakfast is a glass of orange juice, a cup of coffee and a bowl of cereal.

People who start the day with a slug of vitamin C, a dose of caffeine and a helping of carbohydrate are happier and perform better throughout the morning, Professor Andy Smith of the University of Bristol said.

A study of 600 people who were asked to record their breakfast habits found that those who regularly ate cereal first thing in the morning had a more positive mood compared with those who ate other foods or had no breakfast. Elderly cereal eaters were also found to have higher IQs.

However the same meal eaten later in the day did not have the same effect, and researchers are investigating how breakfast enhances performance. "It is possibly the effect of the glucose — the primary fuel of the brain. After fasting overnight you need it," Professor Smith told the British Psychological Society conference in Edinburgh.

"We did not look at the type of cereal eaten, but it would be interesting to know whether cornflakes or All Bran has the greater effect," he added.

The study provided no information about cooked breakfasts because the diets of the non-cereal eaters were not recorded. But other research has shown that cooked breakfasts do improve mood, probably because they are now unusual and regarded as a treat.

In further research, Professor Smith said that people who drank the equivalent of four cups of coffee a day performed more efficiently throughout the day than those who drank less and he suggested that sensible employers should hand out free coffee or tea.

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Teachers boo Shephard attack on union

By David Charter
Education Correspondent

GILLIAN SHEPHARD was hissed and booed by more than 500 teachers yesterday after she said that industrial action was unacceptable behaviour. The Education and Employment Secretary was heckled as teachers insisted that giving parents the power to stop them striking would deepen the crisis of indiscipline in schools.

Speaking to the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, Mrs Shephard defended Conservative manifesto plans to allow those affected by strikes to halt them with a court injunction. The union said that this would give even more power to unruly pupils and their parents to disrupt school life. The union has won several high-profile victories against troublesome children by threatening to strike if forced to teach them and will consider industrial action next term to prevent the return on appeal of two boys expelled for carrying an air pistol at Yorkshire Martyrs Collegiate School, Bradford.

Mrs Shephard yesterday praised the union for bringing discipline problems at The Ridings School, Halifax, into the spotlight, but said striking was "not the way for professional people to behave".

In an uncompromising performance at the NASUWT annual conference in Bournemouth, she endured jeers throughout her speech over nursery vouchers, school inspection and plans to appraise teachers based on their pupils' results.

The barracking marked a growing stand-off between politicians and teacher unions during their Easter conference season.

David Blunkett, Mrs Shephard's Labour Shadow, told the more militant National Union of Teachers that he would not accept "bullying" tactics from teachers. He said it was not acceptable for them to strike over government policies.

Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the NASUWT, said he would ballot his 165,000 members for industrial action if the next Government did not cut workload within a year. The union yesterday voted to boycott after-school homework clubs, a key part of Labour's plans, unless they were paid extra. Labour responded by saying it wanted the clubs to be staffed by students and elderly volunteers.

A survey for the union next week will confirm teachers' dissatisfaction with politicians by showing a large percentage undecided over who to vote for. Mr de Gruchy said: "Both manifestos of the two main parties are so uninteresting. The Conservative re-hashes all the old arguments about structure and does nothing to raise the morale of teachers. Labour makes more of a move towards helping the teaching profession by reducing class sizes."

Mr de Gruchy told Mrs Shephard her plans further to limit industrial action struck "at the very heart of human freedom".

Mrs Shephard said the conference had been "stimulating and enjoyable" and left in defiant mood. "You have said goodbye to me but don't hold your breath," she said. "I'll be back."

Mr de Gruchy responded: "We hope to welcome you back. I am sure it will be quite an experience to come back as a Shadow of your former self."

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Central London gridlocked by rail bomb alerts

By Richard Ford and
Michael Horsnell

LARGE areas of central London were gridlocked last night after bomb alerts at mainline rail stations forced the closure of surrounding main roads.

As British Transport police searched King's Cross, St Pancras, Waterloo and Euston after telephoned threats, senior officers held an anti-terrorist summit to discuss ways of combating a new IRA strategy aimed at causing maximum disruption in the run-up to the election.

A spokesman for the AA said: "Major roads have been sealed off because of security alerts and central London is pretty well gridlocked. This is one of the worst cases of delay we have ever seen."

The alerts led to the suspension for several hours of mainline rail services in and out of King's Cross, St Pancras and the Thameslink line at King's Cross. Underground services were also suspended before the start of the rush-hour. Tube trains were later allowed to run but not to stop at King's Cross.

Traffic problems were exacerbated by subsidence at Westminster Underground station due to excavations for the Jubilee Line. Eastbound traffic was not allowed to cross Westminster Bridge.

The anti-terror summit took place as police reopened stretches of the M5 and the M6 in the West Midlands which had been closed to traffic for more than 30 hours after bombs were planted under an elevated section of the carriageway. There were unconfirmed reports that one of the bombs placed under the M6 contained up to 1½ lb of Semtex high explosive, enough to cause severe damage to a main junction.

Commander John Grieve, head of Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Branch, took part in the summit in his role as national co-ordinator for combating terrorist activity.

Mervyn Jones, Chief Constable of Cheshire, said the meeting demonstrated that the country's 43 police forces worked very closely on tackling terrorism. "By collectively looking at the pattern of activity in these incidents, we are able to address the big picture and bring together all of the information relevant to our particular investigations."

The driver of an articulated lorry died early yesterday when it careered off a bridge and blocked the main West Coast railway line. No other vehicle was involved in the accident on the A519 in the Staffordshire hamlet of Millmeece, near Eccleshall. The crash affected commuters trying to avoid traffic jams caused by the M5 and M6 closures.

Simon Pemberton (Peter Wingfield), left, and Eddie Grundy (Trevor Harrison)

Forget the polls, Eddie's safe

By Robin Young

A VILLAGE crisis that sparked a nationwide campaign ended happily last night, as the botch-and-mend Grundys kept control of Grange Farm in *The Archers*, defeating eviction by dastardly landlord, Simon Pemberton.

The latest plot in the Radio 4 drama had appeared to grip more of Middle England than the election, and led listeners launching a pro-Grundy campaign which sought the support of John Gummer, the Environment Secretary.

Despite an agricultural track record which included a conviction for leaving sheep undipped two years ago, another for polluting the river with slurry run-off from their ill-kept farmyard, and no fewer than eight livestock escapes in the past year alone, Eddie Grundy was heard by four million listeners as he returned from an agricultural tribunal hearing and told his wife, Clarrie: "We've won love. It's all right now Clarrie. It's all over."

Pemberton had based his case for eviction on two points: the Grundys' poor husbandry and the argument that the land could be more profitably used if farmed directly by the estate. The evidence which turned the verdict against him was given by Shula Hebden (*née* Archer), formerly Pemberton's estate agent, who weighed in as expert farming witness on behalf of her family's erstwhile enemies, the grubby and ever-grumbling Grundys. Pemberton may not be finished yet. There could be trouble ahead for Susan Carter, his employee, who risked her job by telling the Grundys' legal representative that the he secretly planned to put Grange Farm entirely down to the EU grant-rich crop of the moment, flax.

"This has been one of our most successful stories of recent years," said *The Archers* editor, Vanessa Whitburn, criticised in the past for introducing swearing, drug taking, armed robbery, suicide, racism, domestic violence and abortion to the everyday saga of countryfolk. "It featured a dramatic conflict between strong characters, while reflecting the real erosion of smaller, traditional farms."

Islanders celebrate buy-out

The 64 islanders of Eigg were celebrating last night after having bought the Hebridean isle, ending the long and bitter reign of absentee private lairds. Their £1.5 million offer was accepted by those acting for Marlin Eckhart Maruma, a German artist who bought Eigg less than two years ago. The island is "dry", with no pubs or hotels, but islanders believe that private cellars will provide a celebratory drink. The Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust will become the official island owners on June 12.

Woman starved

The daughter of a former Tory MP starved to death, a coroner's court found. Catherine Bingham, 39, of Heswall, Merseyside, weighed three stone when police found her dead at home last month. Her father was the late Richard Bingham.

Murder charge

Police last night charged Samson Gower, 18, with the murder of poet Deborah Thomas, 37, who was found battered to death in her blazing home in Brighton on Easter Day. He will appear at the town's magistrates' court this morning.

Record GP quits

Dr Adrian Caro, who once held the world record for the most hours on duty in a week — 139 — is to retire from general practice in Dereham, Norfolk, because of stress. In 1971 he led a junior hospital doctors' strike against excessive working hours.

Princess's riches

Diana, Princess of Wales, has made her first appearance in the annual listing by *The Sunday Times* of Britain's 1,000 richest people. Her divorce settlement helped her to share 916th place with the cook Delia Smith. Both women are worth £17 million.

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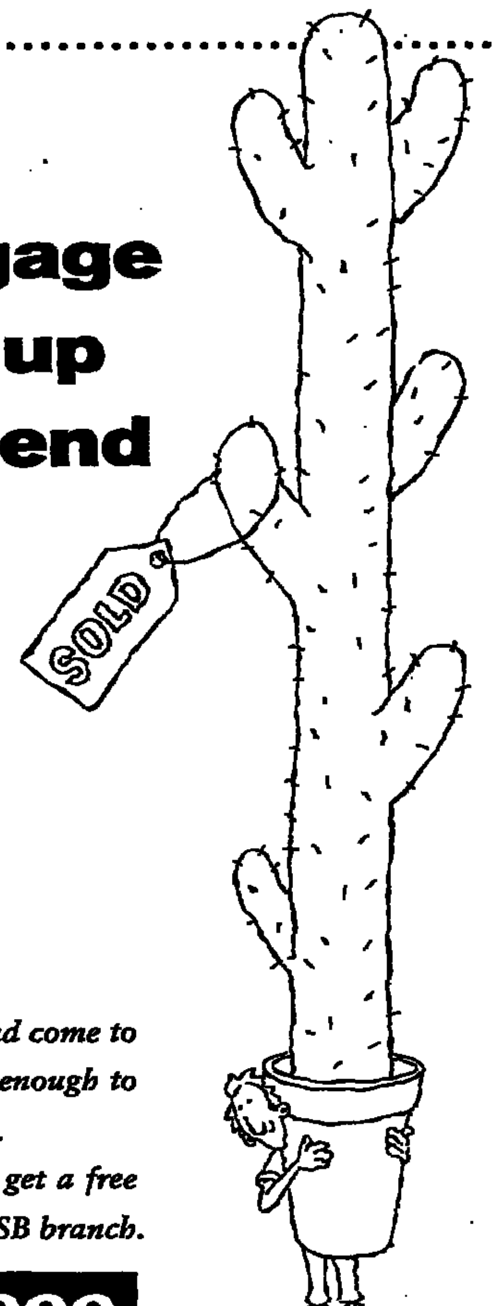

Scotland

Continued from page 1

a Scottish parliament to those of an English parish council. His comparison may have been designed to reassure English voters who fear that Labour could destabilise Britain with its plans for constitutional change. But the Scots took it as a further emasculation of the parliament they have waited 300 years to see.

Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, said: "Tony Blair's dismissive remarks about a Scottish parliament betray the extent to which he has duped his own Scottish supporters. If he agrees with us that sovereignty must remain at Westminster, why does he not abandon this reckless scheme?"

The comparison of a Scottish parliament with a parish council was "blatantly dishonest", but if what Scotland was to get was "no more significant than a parish council, why risk the integrity of the United Kingdom?"

Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party, said: "Tony Blair's reversal of Scottish sovereignty goes to the very heart of new Labour's retreat on the Scottish constitution. And likening the powers of an assembly to those of a local authority gives the game away about the weakness of devolution. Blair has blown the Scottish election wide open with these devestating remarks."

Sir David Steel of the Liberal Democrats said: "Tony Blair should leave talking about Scotland to his Scottish colleagues who understand the issues. Sadly when he opens his mouth on the subject he puts his foot in it.

"He says 'sovereignty resides with the Westminster parliament' and 'that we are not devolving sovereignty'. Frankly that is gobbledegook."

Sellafield fined over unsafe transport

OPERATORS of the Sellafield nuclear plant showed a "total disregard" of repeated warnings that a bridge carrying radioactive waste over a railway line was in danger of collapse, a magistrate said yesterday.

British Nuclear Fuels was fined the maximum of £20,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,844 by Whitehaven Magistrates' Court in Cumbria after it admitted breaching the Radioactive Substances Act.

The court was told that, for more than six years, the state-owned company failed to act on a series of recommendations that it should carry out "urgent and immediate" repair work on the 100-yard long bridge carrying the main low-level radioactive discharge from the plant over the Barrow-to-Carlisle railway line and out into the Irish Sea.

Steven Zdolyny, for the prosecution, told the court that there had been a risk that a collapse of the bridge could fracture the pipe and allow radioactive material to escape. Frank Hornsby, the chairman of the Bench, said the public had a right to expect that BNFL should fully carry out its responsibilities. "The total disregard of reports prepared between 1990 and 1995 recommending urgent remedial action is of grave concern," he said.

The Environment Agency, which brought the prosecution, accepted that the environmental results of any collapse of the bridge would have been small because the plant's leak-detection system would have shut off the discharge.

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Ford Escort reaches the end of the road

By Tim Jones

Satisfied customers: Ford Escort drivers have come from all walks of life and have included Diana, Princess of Wales, and Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor

THE Ford Escort, one of the most famous yet derided names in motoring, is nearing the end of the road. More than 30 years after the People's Car rolled off the production lines, Ford is looking to rename the humble family saloon which has numbered Diana, Princess of Wales, Essex Woman and the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, among its fans.

The company is seeking to consign the name to the history books and come up with a sleeker, slicker moniker to drive the car into the new millennium. It is a high-risk strategy which yesterday surprised industry experts and the advertising agencies, which know the value of a tried and tested brand name. The move may even dismay some of the 18 million people worldwide who have bought the modest mid-market saloon which has been restyled many times since it was launched in its Mark 1 form in 1968.

Although no firm decision has yet been taken, the company is expected to pay image consultants up to £500,000 to come up with a new name. For a car which has supplied the company's bread-and-butter profits for three decades, it will be a decision Ford cannot afford to get wrong.

In spite of being associated with Essex girls and having its acoustic properties tested by young men with loud music systems, the Escort has also been loved by upmarket enthusiasts. Diana, Princess of Wales, once owned a 115 mph Ford Escort Cabriolet and Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, still drives a red M-registered model.

Professor Garel Rhys, an industry expert of Cardiff University, said: "Escort is already a European name. It is unthinkable that VW or Toyota would kick names such as Golf or Corolla into touch."

Trevor Beattie, creative director of GGT advertising, said: "I am not surprised they are thinking of changing the name, just disappointed. The Escort name, after all these years, means something. I just know a new name will be something ludicrous and meaningless, wind-tested so as not to offend any nation on Earth. I dread to think what they will come up with."

Moray MacLennan of M&C Saatchi, the advertising agency, said: "Changing the name of a well-loved product can be dangerous but the company will not be altering the essential Fordness of the car.

"They will want a name which will retain the heritage and warm values of the old product while creating something for the new millennium. It could be quite tricky."

Since it first rolled off the production line in 1968, as a sedate family saloon which went from 0-60 in a stately 22.3 seconds, reaching a top speed of 75 mph, the Escort has undergone five reincarnations. The latest 1.8 injection two door cabriolet reaches 60mph in 10 seconds and has a top speed of 120 mph.

Special editions, much favoured by boy racers, have included the Mexico, the RS2000, XR3i and the exotically named Calypso. And where they were once sold in only bland colours they now can be had in Chianti Red, Mint Green, Bahama Blue and Spring Violet. For three years in a row, in the early 1980s, the Escort was the world's best-selling car and, until recently, the top-selling model in Britain.

Ford's decision earlier this year to cease producing the Escort at its plant in Halewood, Merseyside, threatened the company with a national strike. That was averted only when the Government stepped in with a £15 million grant to ensure that a "people carrier", based on the Escort, would be made at the factory.

The replacement car for the current model, know only as the "World Escort", is to be built in Cologne. It will be launched next year.

A spokesman for the company said no decision had been taken on whether the Escort name would be scrapped. "We cannot confirm or deny what the replacement will be called."

Consultant will be paid £500,000 to test-drive new brand name

By Alan Copps

WHATEVER name is chosen to replace the long-serving Escort, the £500,000 Ford is expected to pay a branding consultant will be money well spent if it avoids some of the deeper potholes on the road to a new car name.

Even the world's most prestigious carmaker is not immune. Rolls-Royce wanted to add to its renowned catalogue of Silver Ghosts and Silver Shadows a model named the Silver Mist — until a linguist among the executives at Crewe pointed out that "Mist" in German meant "dung". Toyota has exactly the same problem in France, where its neat little MR2 coupe, enunciated in French as "Emm-erre-deux", sounds rather like "merde".

General Motors' problem in Spain was less scatological but just as tricky. When the Vauxhall Nova was renamed the Corsa, the official reason was the harmonisation of marketing throughout Europe, but the real problem was that in Spain Nova is the equivalent of saying "it doesn't go".

The Escort can justly claim to be the first "Eurocar". Identical models made at Halewood on Merseyside and Cologne in Germany were introduced in 1967 and more than 18.5million have been sold worldwide since then. But the name harks back to the days when cosy but dignified Anglo-Saxon titles like Prefect, Popular and Anglia adorned Ford's bestsellers, a far cry from the aggressive Probe, animal Puma and all-embracing Mondeo which grace some of its current range.

One of the biggest consultancies in the business is the London-based Interbrand, which has worked for most of the world's carmakers. Interbrand gets a thorough briefing on the car's specification and intended market, and then calls in its brainstorming committee — 100 part-timers ranging from resting actors to housewives, from civil servants to peers.

"These are all people chosen for their wide vocabularies, their command of imagery and their ability to converse together," says Interbrand's Tom Blackett. "They do *The Times* crossword, they are good at Scrabble, they have verbal facility and felicity. Ten or 12 have been with us since we started 22 years ago.

"We have access to the registers of names run by national motor industries and have our own massive database. We also have a software programme which can assemble words at random.

"We might give it a three-letter start and see what comes out. Suzuki wanted a name to project the vitality of their small off-roader, so we gave the computer 'Vit' and asked for every vowel-consonant-vowel combination to finish it off. In the long string of quasi-words that came streaming out we found Vitara. They liked it."

In fact the Japanese take the biscuit when it comes to car names, giving us such gems as the Nissan Cedric and the Mazda Bongo Friendee. Toyota's latest offering in Britain is the Picnic.

Cemetery extension is grave intrusion for tycoon

By Shirley English

A TYCOON who once said he was driven by fear of death has blocked plans to extend a village cemetery onto a section of his Scottish estate. Christopher Moran says it would spoil the view.

Mr Moran, 49, says he is not prepared to part with the third of an acre site to Moray council, even if they offered £1 million. He says any expansion would mean that he could see graves from the top windows of Cabrach House on Speyside.

The land is needed to extend the 200-year-old cemetery beside Cabrach parish church. Moray council, which wants the area legally designated as a burial ground, is seeking a compulsory purchase order from Elgin Sheriff Court. The council says the extension would last the community for another 200 years.

Mr Moran, 49, who heads an insurance broking and investment business in London, is one of Britain's wealthiest men. He owns the Cabrach and Glenfiddich estates near Dufftown, which cover 46,000 acres across the heart of Scotland's malt whisky country.

In a profile in a Sunday newspaper he was reputed to be worth about £150 million. He said his ambition and drive came from his fear of death. "The one thing on my mind since I was a child is that I am going to die. Time is short and if you have the ability it is a duty to do what you can. I cannot waste a day."

Mr Moran, who was not available for comment yesterday, has offered two alternative sites on his land for the cemetery, which the council says are unsuitable because they would create a separate graveyard, preventing relatives being buried next to loved ones.

Murder witness's hands cut off in pub

By A Staff Reporter

A MURDER trial witness told a court yesterday how his hands were almost severed with a butcher's knife when he was attacked by a gang in a crowded pub.

Members of the gang pinned down David Jacobs and stopped other drinkers coming to his aid during the attack, which was part of a campaign of intimidation against witnesses, Worcester Crown Court was told.

Mr Jacobs, 32, a former builder who is unable to work because of his injuries, said he had been chatting to friends in a pub in Rubery, Birmingham, last year when he noticed a group walk in at closing time. "I saw one of them had a mask on and he looked round at me and pulled a big knife out of his coat. It was about 18 inches long and looked like it was sharp on both sides."

Mr Jacobs threw his glass at the man and tried to run away but was cornered. "I looked at my hands and I could see broken bones and tendons. My hands were hanging off. I got back up on my feet and that was when the blood started coming. I started shouting 'get an ambulance'." His hands were sewn back in a series of operations.

Ronald Clarke, 30, of Newtown, Birmingham, and James McDaid, 28, of Frankley, West Midlands, deny causing grievous bodily harm with intent to Mr Jacobs. They also deny violent disorder. Lee Anderson, 25, of Rowley Regis, Birmingham and John Wilson, 25, of Northfield, Birmingham, deny violent disorder. The trial continues.

Ex-principal returns missing art to Durham

By Paul Wilkinson

Arnold: said items had been taken by removers

THE former principal of a university college who left after discrepancies were disclosed in his academic qualifications has returned a number of *objets d'art* to the college after a flurry of legal letters.

Lawyers wrote to the Rev Duane Wade-Hampton Arnold when staff at St Chad's at Durham could not find the pieces after his departure last month. They included a coral crucifix presented by its founder in 1904, which the college had valued at £40,000, a Georgian chest of drawers worth more than £1,000, at least one painting and a number of ornaments.

Last night Dr Arnold, who is now at the Concordia theological seminar in Fort Wayne, Indiana, said: "Some items were inadvertently taken by the removers. They have been returned. The matter is now closed."

However he and the college are disputing the ownership of the Georgian chest, which he insists is his. Oliver Hyams, his British solicitor, said he had bought it and taken it back with him: "If it is worth £200, he will be lucky."

The Rt Rev Michael Hensall, chairman of the college governors, said: "We have documentary evidence which shows the chest predates his arrival here. The crucifix had been removed from a safe in the chapel and taken into Dr Arnold's lodgings, ostensibly for safekeeping."

Dr Arnold resigned in January, while on three months leave of absence, after details of his qualifications listed in *Who's Who* and other reference books proved to be bogus. He blamed clerical errors and a plot against him by academics who disapproved of his radical methods. He is taking the college and university to an industrial tribunal alleging constructive dismissal.

Mr Hyams said that the college had asked about 11 missing items. Dr Arnold had found seven when he unpacked the container of his effects in the US. Besides the crucifix and the desk there was a desk lamp, a letter rack, an ash tray, a tray and a small safe. He claimed that none had any great value. Of the other four items, one painting was found in Britain at the restorers and a second painting was found in the college.

"The container was packed by the removal men after he had left the country. Frankly he sees this all as a storm in a tea-cup," Mr Hyams said.

The college, which had approached Durham police to investigate the matter, has told the force it is dealing with the matter itself.

Fireman's love of job drove him to arson

By A Staff Reporter

A PART-TIME fireman has been detained for two years after admitting a series of arson attacks.

Mathew Whiting, 19, derived such excitement from fighting fires that he began to set them. The judge told him that his actions had let down his family, particularly his father, who had been a fireman for 35 years.

Edmund Walters, for the prosecution, told Reading Crown Court that Whiting had started the fires — causing damage of almost £30,000 — in the Hungerford area of Berkshire last summer. He had set fire to a stack of barley straw, bales of hay and a Dutch barn.

Whiting, of Hungerford, admitted four counts of arson and asked for a further arson charge to be taken into consideration. The court was told that he had been a retained firefighter at Hungerford Fire Station from 1994 until he resigned in 1996 after being arrested.

Paul Reid, for the defence, said: "Whiting's father was a long-serving fireman. His brother is a fireman. He wanted to become a fireman from a very young age. He loved the job. It's clear he loved the thrill of it ... the rush of adrenalin when his bleeper went off ... when he went to the station with the engines running, the lights flashing."

Judge Spence, said: "It was a total abuse of your trust as a firefighter, as a protector of society." He ordered Whiting to be detained for two years in a Young Offenders' Institution. No order for costs or compensation was made.

Elton John steps lightly into sixth decade

By Emma Wilkins

John: will celebrate with 600 friends

THE centrepiece of a lavish fiftieth birthday party for Elton John tomorrow will be a display by a ballroom dancing team from South Wales. But there won't be a sequin in sight when the 16-strong Ystrad Fawr Formation Team takes to the floor at London's Hammersmith Palais because their manager regards spangles as "old hat".

The fancy dress party for 600 people has been organised under the strictest secrecy by the pop star's management team. Phillip Perry, was happy to discuss his troupe's routine but fell silent when pressed about whether John would join in. "I can tell you about the dancing, but I can't betray the trust of my client about any other details," he said.

The male dancers will be in tails and the women in fuschia pink flowing dresses. "We won't have a single sequin. We regard all that as rather old hat. We don't go for glitter any more," Mr Perry said.

The purple and gold invitations, embossed with a gold crest, invite guests for 6.30pm with carriages at 1am. The guest list is reported to include George Michael, Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall, Rod Stewart, Nanette Newman and Gianni Versace.

John, who celebrated his actual birthday on March 25 with a small party in Los Angeles, has already received an exclusive early present: honorary membership of the Royal Academy of Music, an accolade also given to Mendelssohn, Liszt and Richard Strauss.

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Tax shake-up launches a boom for accountants

By Marianne Curphey, deputy personal finance editor

ACCOUNTANTS are gearing up for a bonanza when nine million self-assessment forms for income tax are sent out next week.

The Inland Revenue insisted yesterday that the forms had been made as simple as possible for the change. However, the financial services industry is likely to make between £50 and £500 per case for helping worried taxpayers.

The new form, which will be sent out from Monday, has eight pages and up to nine supplementary sections. Taxpayers face a fine of £100 if it has not been returned by next January 31 and a further £100 if it is not returned by the following July.

One in three adults will be affected by self-assessment, which begins with the new financial year starting today. It applies to the self-employed, company directors, higher-rate taxpayers, some pensioners and those described by the Revenue as having "unusual" tax affairs. Recipients can choose whether they want to calculate their tax and send a cheque, or send all the details and let the Inland Revenue do it.

Demand for accountants who can help to fill in tax forms is expected to double this year and a number of firms have set up one-stop shops in high streets. Although other countries, including the United States, require individuals to calculate their own tax, many have low-cost accountancy services that charge about £25 for a consultation.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales warned that those who did not seek advice might not be able to cope and could face fines. Consumer bodies have advised people looking for an accountant to shop around.

The institute, which has 120,000 chartered accountant members, said the new system was "wide open to misinterpretation" by taxpayers. Peter Hobbs, head of tax at the institute, said: "It will simply not be possible for many thousands of taxpayers to understand the forms sufficiently well to complete them correctly. It is vital that taxpayers seek help from properly qualified advisers."

A spokesman for the Inland Revenue said: "We have consulted widely on this tax return. It is a far more straightforward, simple and easy-to-understand form than in the past."

One accountancy firm offering individuals help with the new forms is DBS Management, which will calculate an individual's tax bill for £75 a year. The service is available to employed (Schedule E) or retired taxpayers only.

Another is TAX etc, in London, which plans to set up new offices around the country later in the year. It offers an "off-the-street" one-hour assessment service, charging a flat fee of £100 where the tax affairs are relatively simple, and £150 for more complicated returns.

Ashley Deakin, a director, said: "As soon as the Revenue announced that it intended to change the whole tax system, we knew there would be an opportunity for us. This venture will potentially make us money — we are not a charitable organisation. However, the service will be mutually beneficial, since it is possible that we can save taxpayers money."

ONE STOP BUT A LOT OF QUESTIONS

TAXPAYERS who go to seek help from the new one-stop shops would need to bring details of the following:

☐ **salary**
☐ **rental income, in the case of landlords**
☐ **investment income, including share dividends**
☐ **interest from building society and bank accounts**
☐ **income from overseas**
☐ **capital gains arising from assets bought and sold**
☐ **pension income.**

They would also need to bring:

☐ **P45 and P60 forms**
☐ **record of mortgage relief interest and other loans**

Weekend Money, page 31

Greenwich denies its clock is second-best

By Nigel Hawkes
Science editor

THE Old Royal Observatory in Greenwich, home of time, defended itself yesterday against the charge that its latest showpiece clock cannot count the seconds until the end of the millennium.

The curse of the millennium clocks has already struck in Dublin and Paris, where clocks designed to count down to 2000 have been withdrawn. But Greenwich shrugged off the charge that its clock is misleading because it takes no account of "leap seconds".

Dr Kristen Lippincott, director of the millennium project at the museum, said: "It tells the right time now and it'll be telling the right time on December 31, 1999."

She agreed that the clock, which counts down the days, hours, minutes, seconds, tenths and hundredths of a second, does not take account of an extra second to be introduced on June 30 this year, to compensate for the slowing rotation of the Earth.

GILL ALLEN

Andrew Loftus of Accurist, which made the millennium clock, checking the time

It would be wrong to do so until the exact moment when the world's most precise clocks are adjusted by adding the extra second, she said. There are likely to be several more leap seconds before 2000: all will be added at the appropriate moment.

This means that it is impossible to know now precisely how many seconds will elapse before we can raise the champagne glasses at midnight on December 31, 1999. The Earth has been slowing, but it might speed up, said Dr Lippincott. Leap seconds are introduced to ensure that atomic clocks, which keep better time than the spinning Earth, do not get out of synchrony with it.

Dr Lippincott also rebutted as pedantic charges that the observatory was celebrating the millennium too early. Since there was no year zero, the true millennium will be in 2001 — by which time the planning permission granted by English Heritage to place the clock on the wall of the observatory at Greenwich will have run out.

"We'll have an even bigger party to usher in 2001," she promised.

Richard Morrison, page 19

Solicitor wins sex bias case

By Lin Jenkins

A SOLICITOR who was sacked for spurning her employer's sexual advances won her claim of sex discrimination yesterday. However, the industrial tribunal rejected Sheena Khan's case for unfair dismissal because she had falsified her curriculum vitae.

Miss Khan, 29, had rejected offers of romance from Robert Broudie, a criminal lawyer in Liverpool, but, when he continued to pester her, she recorded their conversations. On one occasion she saw him standing outside her home peering through a window. When she let him in he demanded she return half a cake which he had given her.

She said he had kissed her on the shoulder at the office Christmas party. His telephone calls to her home put her relationship with her boyfriend under pressure and they split seven months after she started the job.

The tribunal in Liverpool rejected her claim of unfair dismissal when it was disclosed that her curriculum vitae said she had been awarded a 2:1 degree by Leicester University. She had a 2:2 from Leicester Polytechnic.

Mr Broudie, 48, brother of the Lightning Seeds singer Ian Broudie, is to appeal against the judgment, which his solicitors described as "perverse".

NEWS IN BRIEF

Muggers' victim dies

A pensioner collapsed and died only hours after she was mugged for her purse, containing £80, while out shopping. Edna Brown, 75, of Scarborough, North Yorkshire, suffered a heart attack as she recovered from the shock of the theft at home. Police said later that three local men had been arrested.

Jaguar recall

Jaguar is to recall 4,766 of its new XK8 sports cars, including 805 sold in Britain, because of a possible fault. The Coventry company said there had been three minor incidents involving the rear suspension. No one was hurt.

Rail crash trial

Peter Afford, 56, the driver of a commuter train that crashed last August at Watford Junction, killing a passenger, was committed for trial accused of manslaughter and endangering passengers' lives by failing to stop at a red signal.

Sound and Furey

Police have been unable to trace £150,000 worth of instruments stolen from a tour van of the Irish folk band The Fureys in Barking, east London. They include accordions, guitars, a bodhran drum and a banjo.

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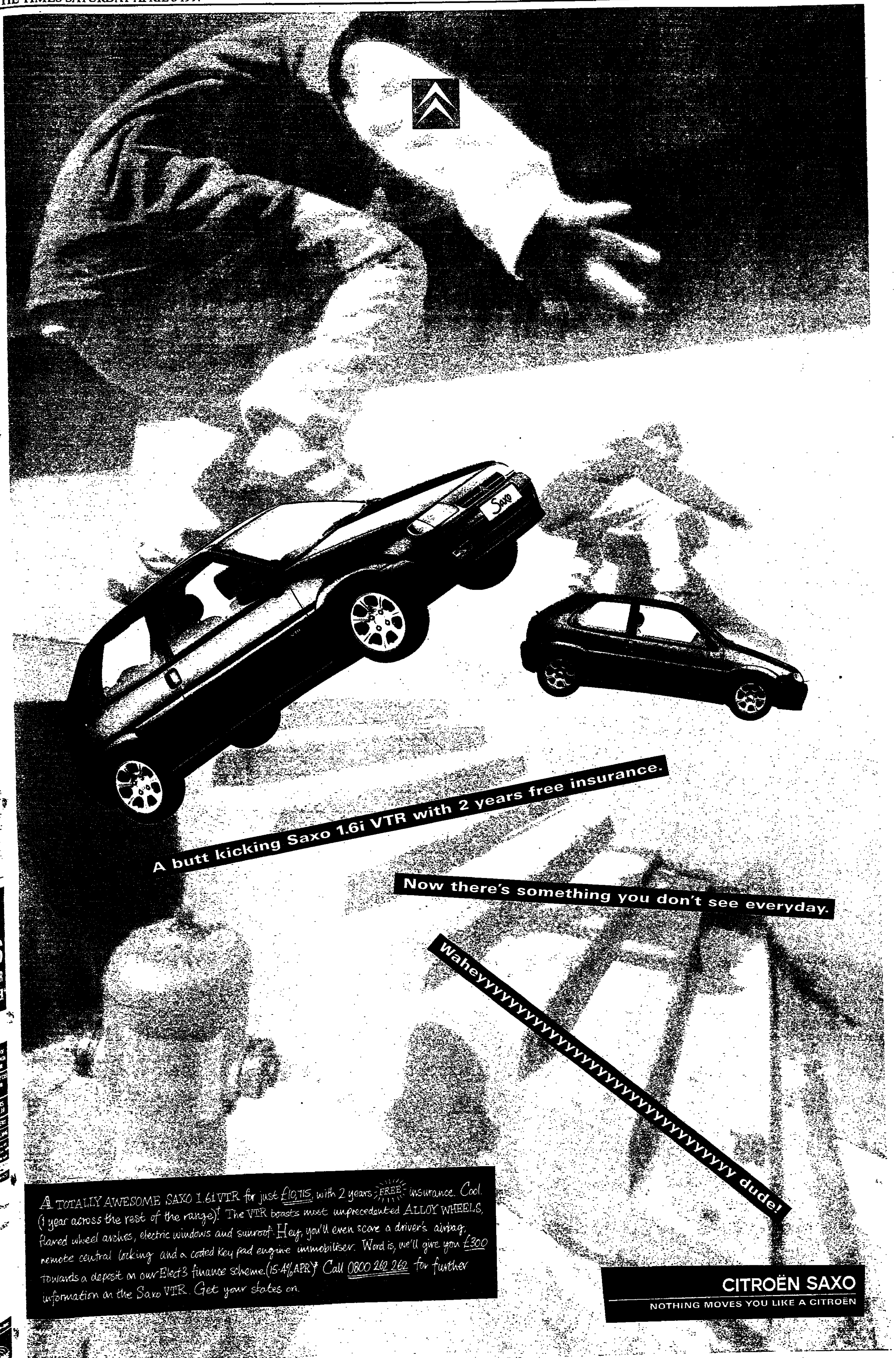

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THE TIMES

Lottery grants will buy pets for pensioners

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN

PENSIONERS and the infirm who need pets for companionship will soon be able to apply for lottery grants to buy, feed and care for them.

David Sieff, chairman of the National Lottery Charities Board, said yesterday that its aim was to help those at greatest disadvantage in society and to improve quality of life in the community: "The care and welfare of animals is also linked to the welfare of people, and so we want to support work with pets and other animals."

The grants for animals will be channelled through charities or local voluntary groups working with the elderly, the infirm or with animals. The money could also be used to help finance city farms, which give urban children a chance to get to know farmyard animals. A board spokesman said: "What we don't want is to simply give lottery money for animals which don't have any relation to helping people's lives. Pets are often very helpful for elderly people who are lonely or for sick people who cannot get out."

Betty McBride, a spokeswoman for Help the Aged, welcomed the scheme: "If you are isolated, frail or lonely, having a pet can vastly improve the quality of your life. Caring for a pet can make you feel better about yourself."

Although cats required less maintenance than dogs, a small dog was often a perfect pet an elderly person, she said. "Keeping mobile is an essential part of growing older. It is one of those truisms that the more you get out, the fitter and healthier you will be. Having a small dog that you can take for a walk will increase your quality of life as well as keep the dog fit."

The RSPCA gave the plans a cautious welcome. A spokeswoman said: "Our concern would be that there was ongoing provision for the care of pets. The board will have to assess how people who get the grants are going to continue to pay for their animals for the rest of that animal's life. They will also have to consider whether the grants will cover things such as pet insurance. We advise all pet owners to take out insurance so that they can pay for any medical treatment that their animal might need."

The cost of a dog or cat from an RSPCA rescue home varies from about £30 to £70. The cost of keeping a dog throughout an average life of 12 years is £7,324. The cost of a cat over an average 13 years is £7,827.

The plans are part of the board's fifth round of grant giving, which will also provide cash for charities or voluntary organisations working with homeless people and for community projects aimed at improving the environment. A total of about £160 million will be available for the schemes, under the joint titles of Voluntary Sector Development and Improving People's Living Environment.

The board will accept applications from May 6 to September 5. The telephone number for applications is 0345 919191.

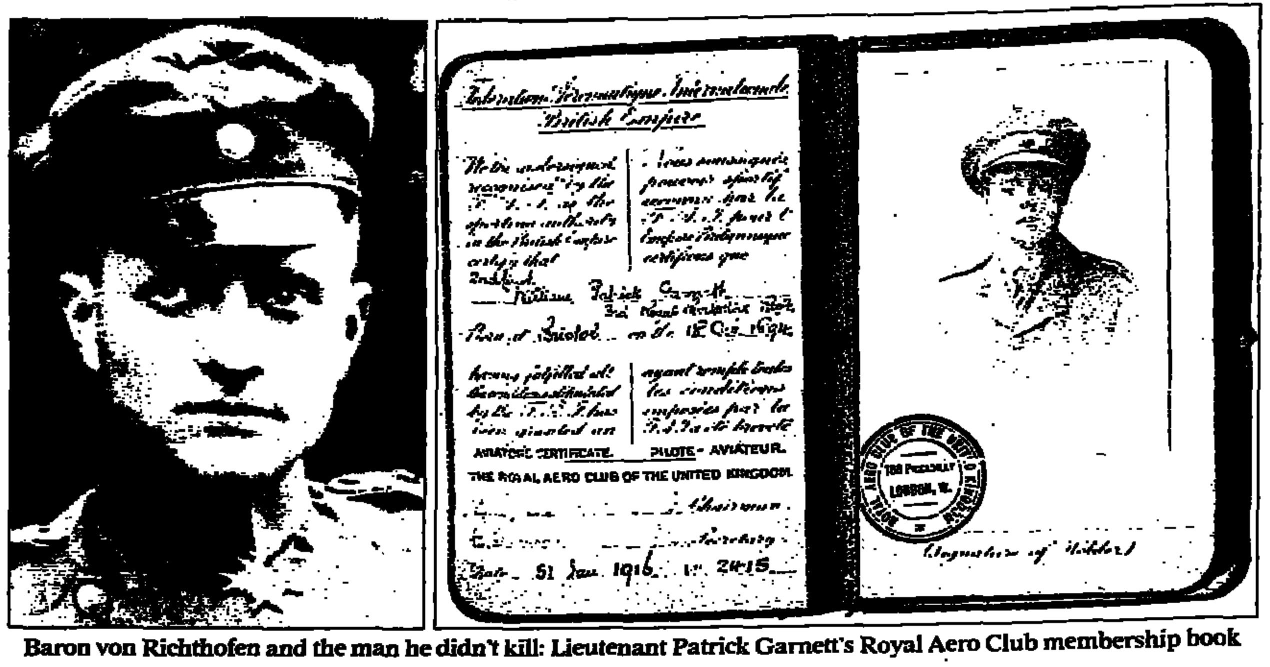
Lost pup becomes dog of war

A STRAY puppy that crossed a minefield to join the Army has been officially enlisted with a name, rank, serial number and patrol duties.

Acting Gunner Hooch D.O.G., service number 281296, was spotted by troops from 32 Regiment, Royal Artillery, who are on duty in Cyprus. Lance Bombardier Mark Crane said: "It was a cold day. We saw a wet, bedraggled lump of fur in the minefield next to our observation post. At first, we thought the poor thing was dead, then it struggled to its feet and limped towards us, straight across the minefield. We went down to the wire and cheered when it crawled through."

The eight-week-old stray mongrel bitch had sores and an injured leg and was taken to a vet for treatment. Bombardier Scott Dalton said: "We made a dogbed in a box that had contained drinks for our bar, so we called her Hooch."

Now fully recovered, the dog is staying with patrols keeping the peace between Greek Cypriot and Turkish forces in the United Nations buffer zone.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Baron von Richthofen and the man he didn't kill: Lieutenant Patrick Garnett's Royal Aero Club membership book

Grandson downs Red Baron myth

BY ROBIN YOUNG

THE true story of a British pilot's death in a dogfight with the Red Baron has been uncovered after 80 years. Patrick Garnett was 22 when his Nieuport Scout biplane was shot down in March 1917.

Baron Manfred von Richthofen, the German air ace nicknamed the Red Baron, was so moved by his young foe's bravery that he wrote to Garnett's widow, Mary, whom he had married only ten weeks before, returning a scrap of her wedding dress which her husband had carried as a talisman, his gold cufflinks and binoculars.

For years Garnett's family believed he was one of the 80 airmen killed by von Richthofen, but now a descendant has pieced together the truth.

Garnett was returning from a morning patrol when he spotted two enemy Albatros aircraft. Without waiting for help, he broke away from his squadron and attacked. Unluckily for him, the two all-red biplanes were from the baron's feared 11th Jasta (Pursuit) Squadron, flown by von Richthofen and Lieutenant Kurt Wolff. In the fierce dogfight which followed, Garnett was quickly outgunned and was shot down a mile behind the German lines.

His widow later married again, and her grandson, Mac Hawkins, 53, from Bridgwater, Somerset, has recently spent months researching Garnett's death. He traced the German fighter squadron's records and found an entry for March 30, 1917: "One Flight. Lieut Wolff successfully, at 11.45am near Fouquières, this side of the lines. Nieuport DD one-seater. Inmate: Lieut Garnett. Killed."

Richthofen learnt of the dead man's recent marriage. Mr Hawkins believes, because Garnett may have survived long enough to speak of it. "He obviously admired Pat's courage and wrote to my grandmother expressing his condolences. She took that to mean that he personally shot Pat down, but now it seems not."

Patrick and Mary Garnett on their wedding day

Mr Hawkins added: "Not surprisingly, she destroyed the letter. She thought this chap had killed her husband, after all." Lieutenant Wolff was killed in September 1917, with 33 kills to his credit.

A 12ft crucifix erected in memory of Garnett, at St Andrew's Church in Backwell, near Bristol, has been restored and rededicated. Mr Hawkins uncovered the memorial, which had become overgrown, while researching his book on Somerset at war, and the family paid for it to be restored.

At the rededication service on Easter Saturday, the anniversary of Garnett's death, a bugler from the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Wiltshire Regiment, the modern equivalent of his regiment, played the *Last Post*, 80 years almost to the minute after he was killed.

Citizen's air force flies into the sunset

BY MICHAEL EVANS
DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

THE RAF Volunteer Reserve, which had more than half a million members during the Second World War, is to be disbanded today. After 60 years the VR, as it is known, is to be amalgamated with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Conceived in the mid-1930s by Marshal of the RAF Lord Tedder, the VR became a "citizen's air force". Clerks, students, teachers and engineers learnt to fly in the evening, after work, and at the weekend. By the time of the Battle of Britain in 1940, one in six of the RAF's officer corps came from the VR ranks. Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, once said: "Thank God for the RAFVR."

The volunteers included Johnnie Johnson, who went on to become Britain's foremost fighter pilot, shooting down 38 German aircraft in the Second World War; he retired as an air vice-marshal.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon, Chief of the Air Staff, paid tribute to the work of the VR and its part in RAF history. He added: "It seems entirely right that for the future we should have one reserve, bringing with it greater flexibility in terms of how it might be deployed." The new combined force is set to double in size to more than 3,000 personnel.

At today's ceremony at RAF Cranwell, which will be led by the Duke of York, Flight Lieutenant Howard Chandler, a Boeing 747 pilot with British Airways, will be among those joining a flypast at the controls of a Hercules transport aircraft.

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Rejoice that the Church is human too

Credo

St Augustine wrote confidently of the Church: "We are the Easter people, and Alleluia is our song!" From the resurrection of Jesus, the Church emerged as God's sign and agent of the new life he wills for the entire world.

Despite the shortcomings of its members and some of the negative publicity the Church attracts, these days between Easter and Pentecost provide a particular focus for reflection on the nature and purpose of God's Easter people. It is important to keep emphasising the sense of new life and salvation at the heart of the Christian message, especially in the face of the cynical comment by a 19th-century critic that "Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, and what we got was the Church". It was meant as an insult but, like many similar gibes, was closer to the truth than the critic intended.

Over the centuries, there has been no shortage of people ready to draw attention to the contrast between the nobility of Jesus's message and the frequent failures of his followers, individually and corporately, to live up to it.

It is a saving grace that probably the larger number of critics are from within the Church. Even among unbelievers, the complaint is often not that the Church is Christian, but that it is not Christian enough. "Call yourselves Christians?" is one of the more polite forms of the complaint.

None of this should surprise us. Jesus himself, in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets before him, was sharply critical of the way in which the institutions of religion can deflect and distract people from God. Faced with this ever present danger, self-examination, repentance and a purpose of amendment of life are essential exercises for us all. We should not resent criticism of our lifestyle and our institutions. We should rather ask if there is any truth in the criticisms.

There is, however, a way of criticising the Church that suggests not just that Christians and their earthly institutions are fallible, but that the idea of embodying religion in institutions is somehow wrong. "Institutional religion" has a bad name.

We live in an age in which institutions generally have a bad name. It is good that we are not as overawed by hierarchies, as in previous generations, and good that freedom of speech is welcomed, enabling hypocrisy to be exposed. But these goods can spill over into what has been called the "culture of contempt". We are in danger of considering cynicism a virtue.

The simple fact is that institutions will always be with us. They are part of the God-given way in which the world works. Because they work under human influences, they will be prone to distortion and sin. That does not invalidate them.

By John Hind

Christians believe that this world is not only made and sustained by God, but that it is restored and renewed by him. The flesh, meaning our earthly life, in all its aspects, may be weak but it is still capable of being the bearer of divinity. Human beings can be redeemed, and so too can their institutions.

In Easter week, Christians celebrate not only the resurrection of Jesus Christ but also our own share in his resurrection.

The Church — God's Easter people — is precisely one way in which the message of the Kingdom of God is embodied. No human individual, philosophy or institution is perfect; but here in the Church, there is a community that shares completely in the ambiguities of earthly life but is at the same time one with the world to come.

God's Easter people rejoice that even institutions can rise again — and again. "Alleluia!" they sing, as they love this strange, mixed body of saints and sinners, in which life is a constant struggle but the joy of Heaven is a present reality as well as a future hope.

This is a way of looking at life which is good news indeed, not for religious interest groups, but for people everywhere struggling to make sense of a world in which the highest treasures are contained in earthly vessels.

☐ *John Hind is Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe.*

Charity treasurer pocketed £109,000

BY A STAFF REPORTER

THE treasurer of a children's charity was jailed for 2½ years yesterday after he admitted stealing £109,000 from it over ten years. Charles Atkinson, 59, a bank clerk, pocketed cash donations to the Church of England Children's Society or forged cheques for cash.

Atkinson, of St Margaret's Bay, near Dover, Kent, admitted 12 thefts and one forgery between July 1986 and February 1996. He asked for a further 320 offences to be considered. Judge David Croft, QC, said: "This reflects ten years of deception and dishonesty, lying to your colleagues on the committee and cheating children."

Maidstone Crown Court was told that Atkinson's wife, a retired teacher, and his two children had no idea what he was up to. There was no lavish lifestyle and their most luxurious holidays were driving down to the South of France to stay at a friend's cottage.

Atkinson told police he did not know where the money had gone and had used it simply to support his family. Sometimes he would pocket up to £5,000 a month, banking coins from the charity's collections but keeping the notes.

He had been made treasurer because he was a senior clerical assistant at NatWest Bank in Canterbury. The bank has since reimbursed the charity for the full loss.

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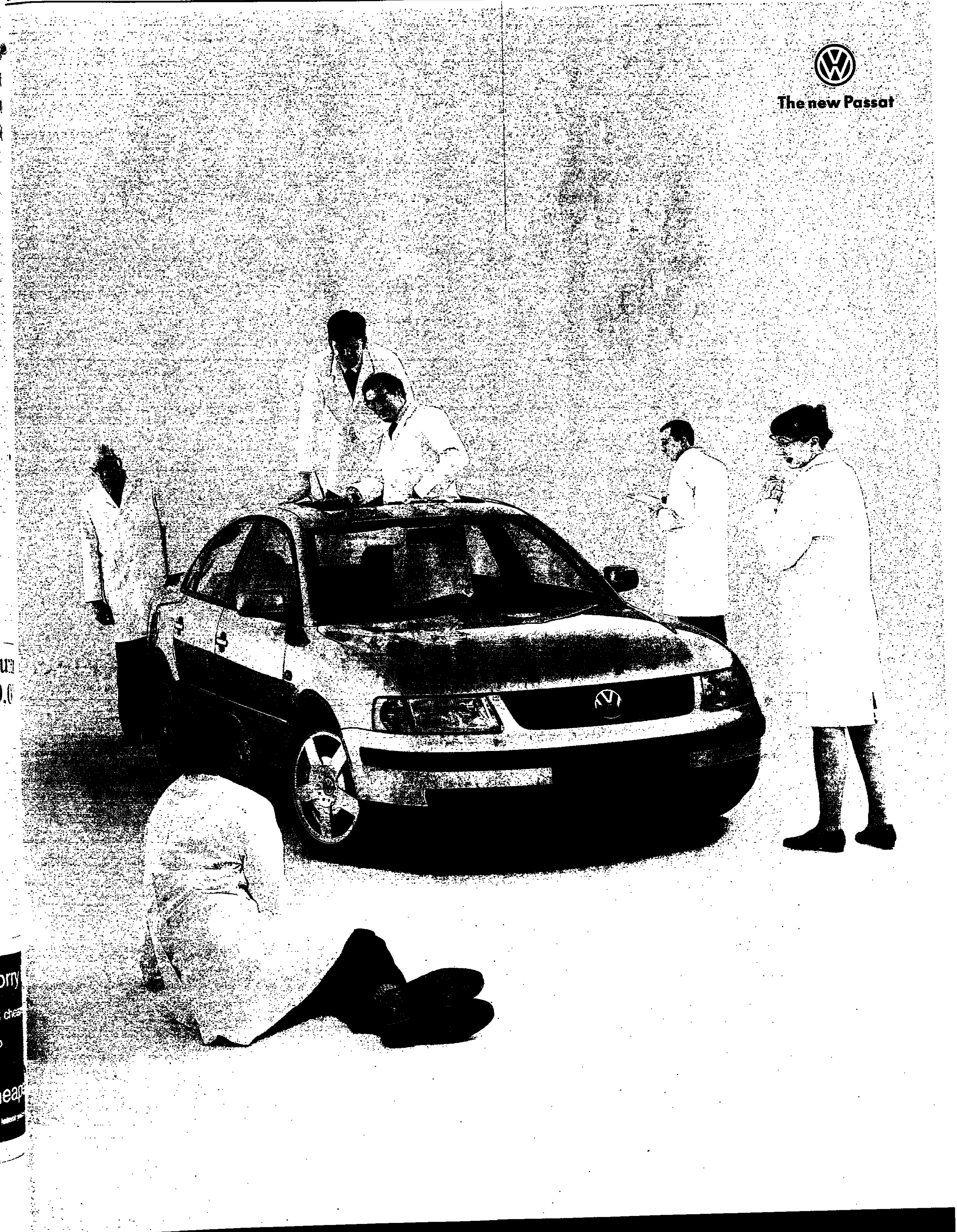

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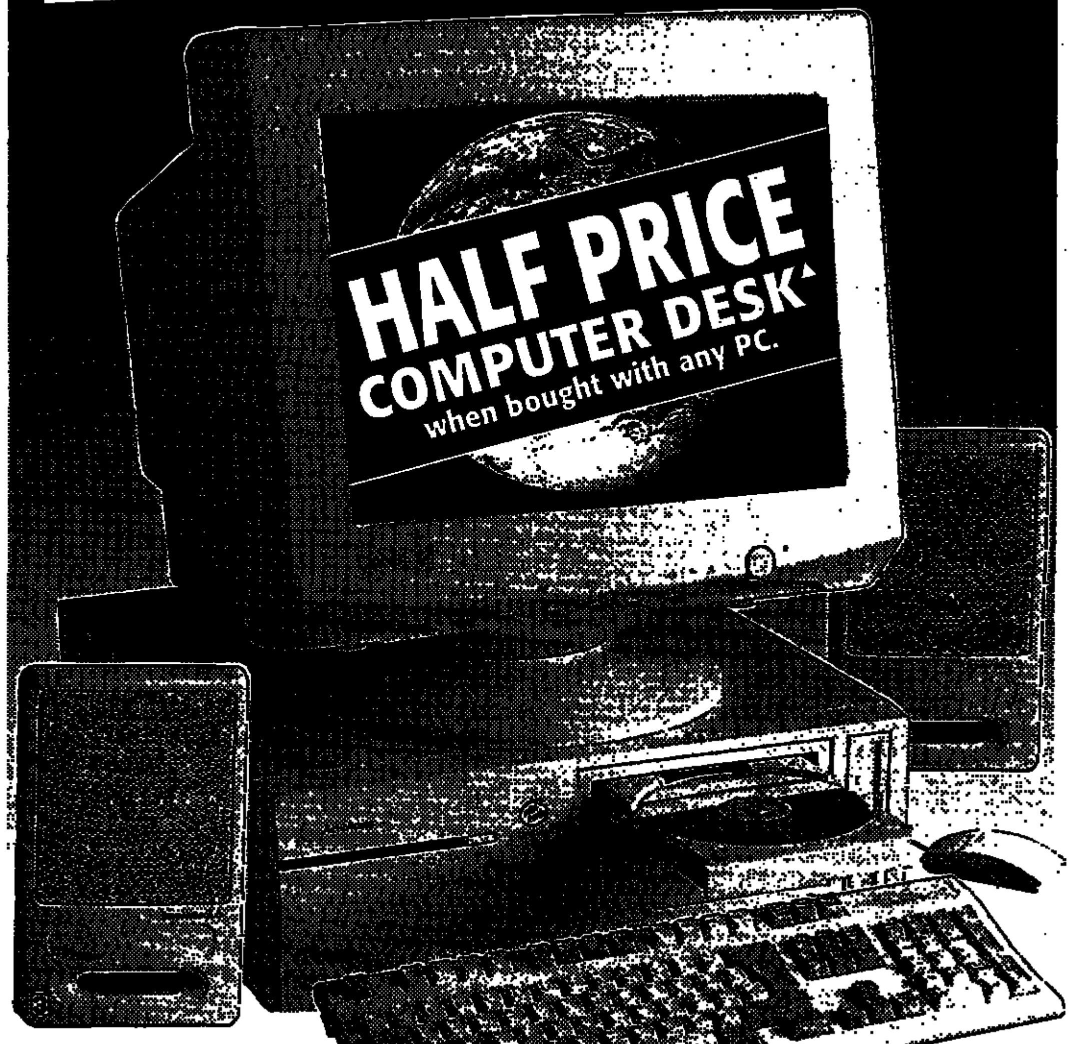

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ELECTION 97

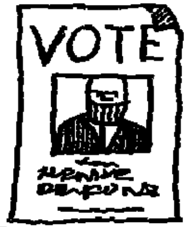
POLL DAY

-26

‘John Major dropped into the Bugle to hoist a pint of warm ale with the anglers’

Charles Bremner – page 14

- **Lib Dems leap where Labour fears to tread Peter Riddell–p13**
- **Cherie Blair wins legal personality of the year award – p14**
- **Who spent most in the poster war? – p 12**



The dishonest agents guide to cheating at election expenses

Details – page 15

Searching out the true colours

Ben Macintyre watches as an author finds the gap between American and British politics is like that between fact and fiction — a little narrower every day

Tony Blair in action on the Scottish question yesterday: some fancy moves, but at least he will never be played by John Travolta

JOE KLEIN sat looking at a new cast of characters yesterday, trying to work out the plot. One thing seemed certain. If the issue of tax in Scotland was the toughest question to be faced by Tony Blair, then there seemed little material for another bestselling novel on the scandalous intrigue behind modern politics.

Mr Klein is the American journalist who turned Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign into the novel *Primary Colors*, going behind the scenes on the election trail as aides struggled with their personal morality while trying to keep the sleazier issues off the agenda. Mr Klein is now the only foreign journalist to gain accreditation for the Blair campaign bus.

Yesterday he had his first taste of the Blair campaign with the colourful spectacle of the Scottish press, red in tooth and claw, giving the Labour leader a severe grilling over devolution. As the candidate gave identical answers to the same questions, as if caught in an endless argumentative loop, the American writer professed some bafflement as to what, precisely, was going on.

"He just won't mention the possibility of a raise in taxes. Right?" Mr Klein wondered, as the press conference on Labour's Scottish manifesto drew to an ill-tempered close.

Mr Klein, now on assignment for *New Yorker* magazine, was a senior political correspondent for *Newsweek* when, under the name "Anonymous", he published *Primary Colors*, initially denying he was the author. It is to be made into a film starring John Travolta and Kristin Scott Thomas as the candidate and his wife. Yesterday Mr Klein said he thought it unlikely that his experiences on the Labour campaign trail would form the basis for another novel, although he added wrily: "I'm not going to foreclose on anything."

First, however, he had to sort out the cast of British characters: "Who's that?" Mr Klein asked, as Alistair Campbell, Mr Blair's press secretary offered the day's spin. That, it was explained, is Labour's taller answer to George Stephanopolous, the pin-up wunderkind of the Democrats' 1992 campaign and believed to be the model for the main protagonist in *Primary Colors*.

The careful Blair campaign could be etched only in more muted and undramatic tones. While Mr Blair was forced into some fancy footwork on the West Lothian question, he is no John Travolta.

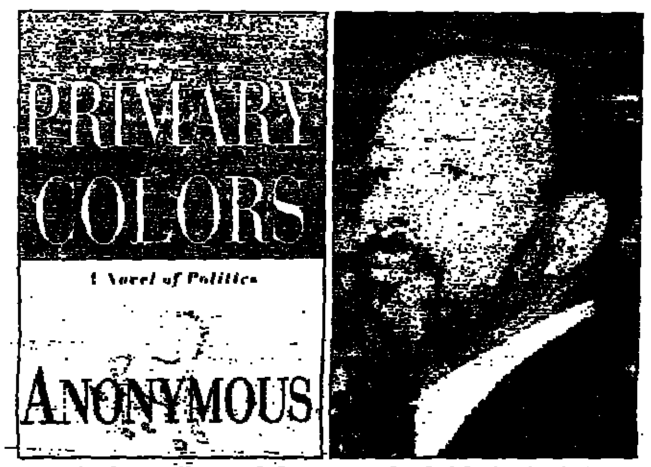
The last time I met Mr Klein was on a campaign swing with Mr Clinton through the state of Georgia, at an event which involved two brass bands, an open-air stadium, massed ranks of cheerleaders and thousands of balloons. The Blair-campaign found itself yesterday afternoon at the Kidsgrove community hall in Staffordshire. This featured one working lavatory, several gallons of strong tea, and 400 locals in a question and answer session with Mr Blair. But while the setting may have been very different, the Blair '97 campaign clearly shows the influence of two successive Democrat campaigns, including slick media handling, snappy sloganeering and an emphasis on carefully coordinated and photo-friendly people-contact.

The Staffordshire "town meeting" was the sort of set-piece event Clinton employed to great effect: the first-name terms, the earnest sincerity, the overwhelmingly enthusiastic audience and the buzz-words — "trust", "hope" — were all leaves taken from the Clinton book.

The Victoria Hall in Kidsgrove was specifically selected to contrast with what the Labour spinners declared would be the "glitz and triumphalism" of John Major's rally at the Albert Hall in London.

As the latest round of low-calibre chicken jokes was exchanged between the waiting journalists, Mr Klein pointed out that this was another idea that had travelled the Atlantic to enter the British election campaign. He asked: "Is this the first time you've had animals?

"It's nice to be here for a breakthrough. You should have been with us in Missouri in 1988. An entire barnyard menagerie turned up to confront Michael Dukakis."



The bestseller and the man who initially denied that he wrote it: *Primary Colors* and Joe Klein

Blair puts Scottish backs up in rush to reassure English

MAGNUS LINKLATER

Tony Blair and Stephen Dorrell are rather similar: mid-forties, Oxford-educated, politically ambitious, formed by Westminster and muddled on Scotland.

Neither seems able to understand that what matters when speaking to the Scots is not what you say, but how you say it. Both made the mistake of assuming that, whatever power may be devolved to Scotland, Westminster will always have the right to revoke it. Whatever logic they thought they were demonstrating, both were guilty of political ineptitude.

Mr Dorrell stated last February that a future Tory government could always abolish a Scottish parliament. Mr Blair said that whatever a Scottish parliament decided, ultimate sovereignty would rest with him as an English MP. Even Michael Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, does not believe that. Mr Blair's remarks were at best ill-judged, at worst simply wrong. Devolving power to Scotland means just that — giving it power that cannot simply be removed by a vote in Westminster.

The Claim of Right document, signed by Labour as one of the partners of the Scottish Constititional Convention, acknowledges as its central thesis "the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs". It adds that, in all its actions, "their needs shall be paramount".

Most of the convention's deliberations have been aimed at defining the best way of enshrining that right. To erode it by playing around with words at this stage, as Mr Blair did yesterday, is to risk Labour's credibility on the one issue in Scotland on which they should be unequivocal. This, he should have realised, is thoroughly dangerous territory.

It is a measure of their collective misjudgment that both Mr Dorrell and Mr Blair chose a Scottish newspaper to voice views that were intended for English ears. Mr Blair is concerned to reassure his English candidates that nothing in Labour's devolution plans will undermine the Parliament to which they hope to be elected. He went out of his way to state that whatever plans a Scottish parliament might put forward, ultimate sovereignty would reside with Westminster.

That statement is constitutionally correct and, if he had stopped there, no damage would have been done. Not even the convention is proposing a federal solution in which the two parliaments in London and Edinburgh would have equal status. But at the same time it is vital that those rights Westminster does cede to Scotland should be enshrined, and that includes Labour's tax-varying powers. Try as he might, Mr Blair cannot pretend on the one hand that he is giving Scotland real power to control its own affairs and on the other that it can always be revoked.

Equally, his choice of words could not have been worse. To say that sovereignty rests "with me as an English MP" is to suggest an authoritarian attitude that Scottish voters will immediately associate with Baroness Thatcher's *de haut en bas* pronouncements that used regularly to get up their noses. And to say, as he did, that the right to raise income tax is no more than that held by an English parish council — which is technically true — is simply condescending and insulting.

How great then is the damage? Not fundamental, perhaps, but certainly destabilising to Labour's campaign in Scotland. It will reinforce the widely perceived notion that Mr Blair is unconvinced about the wisdom of devolution and that he is more concerned with his English voters.

Perhaps more important, it runs directly counter to his repeated entreaty yesterday: trust me. That trust had already been undermined by Labour's decision to hold a two-question referendum on devolution rather than simply introduce legislation for a Scottish parliament once elected. This latest gaffe will give further ammunition, not just to the other parties in Scotland, but to those hitherto silenced members of the old Labour Party in Scotland who may well conclude that new Labour is having second thoughts about its flagship policy.

The Stamina Factor

John Major: 54
Freshness rating: ★★★★
Miles travelled this week: 820
Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 7¾
Interviews: Average 10 per day
Press conferences: 3
Manifesto launches: 1
Average working day: 18 hours

Worst moment:
Nearly losing his temper with John Humphrys of Today when repeatedly questioned about sleaze on Wednesday

Tony Blair: 43
Freshness rating: ★★★★
Miles travelled this week: 2000
Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 7
Interviews: Average 10 per day
Press conferences: 4
Manifesto launches: 2
Average working day: 12 hours

Worst moment:
Facing the Scottish press yesterday after comparing a devolved Scottish parliament to a parish council

Paddy Ashdown: 56
Freshness rating: ★★★★
Miles travelled this week: 1453
Hours spent campaigning on the streets: 10¼
Interviews: Average 10 per day
Press conferences: 3
Manifesto launches: 1
Average working day: 16½ hours

Worst moment:
Finding his manifesto contradicted itself on tax yesterday

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Norma's husband fishes for votes by the river

When John Major sought a quiet pint in a waterside pub, **Charles Bremner** and the world's media just happened to be there

THERE was no cricket match in sight but eternal England was on show yesterday when John Major dropped into the Bugle pub on the Hamble to hoist a pint of warm ale with the anglers.

Through the window of the 12th-century pub, beyond the BMWs and Volvos on the olde car parke, a forest of masts on the river testified to the age-old pursuits of the English. Just the backdrop for a day of messing about near boats, setting course for the future and pursuing the floating voter. Inside the Bugle, packed with "yachties", the media and security men, the Prime Minister was the compleat man-in-the-pub when he dropped in to surprise the locals.

Letting his double-breasted suit flap open and manfully eschewing the tankard's handle, the former Brixton lad sipped his Bass only a little too delicately as he lent a sympathetic ear to the fears of his fishermen friends: that despite Labour's backing away this week from giving parliamentary time to banning fox-hunting, a Blair government would eventually move from foxes to fish and rob them of their sport.

No, the fishing lobby had not formally teamed up with the hunters, but "it's only a short step from fox-hunting to other things," said Jerry Hall, the angler-in-chief. Mr Major assured them of the Tories' love of their sport and invited them to visit his Huntingdonshire fishpond — without their rods.

Mr Hall, it transpired, was also a local Conservative activist, whose aid had been solicited by Central Office in a day that offered a textbook case of the manufactured media opportunity that has become the hallmark of Campaign 1997.

Mr Major's unannounced descent by Boeing 737 on the picturesque mecca of yachting was hardly a hard day on the hustings, even though Mrs Major's handlers, one wearing a badge proclaiming "Re-elect Norma's Husband", fretted that their lady had been upset by the scrum of media that crowded the lane.

But there was a point to the outing. The Hamble falls in Hampshire's Eastleigh constituency, lost by the Tories to the Liberal Democrats after the death of Stephen Milligan in 1994. If the Conservatives are to have any hope, they must win back such traditionally true-blue seats.

Standing windswept on the quayside, halyards clinking on masts behind him, Mr Major implicitly recognised the struggle he faces with the floating voter. The polls were rubbish, he insisted. "The don't-knows are Conservatives who are waiting for the right reason to come home to the Conservative Party ... I expect that they will need a bit of wooing but I think and hope that they will come home and that we will win the election."

Few yacht owners were there to hear the Prime Minister's thoughts because it was only Friday lunchtime and they are mostly what the locals know as DFTs, or Down From Towners.

The diffidence and civility of his nautical jaunt was too much for one American correspondent observing the gentler English art of campaigning. "What is this all about?" he wondered. "This is a totally substance-free day and I paid £520 for it."

The big parties' practice of hitting journalists with some of the world's steepest charges for media access and travel is prompting signs of mutiny from foreign news people. "They started at £570 for the day," grumbled Patrice de Beer, *Le Monde*'s London correspondent. "We had to haggle to get it down to this extortionate level."

SIMON WALKER

Seeking five more years before the mast: Mr and Mrs Major on the Hamble

Thatcher meeting to boost morale

By Andrew Pierce

THE TORY CAMPAIGN

JOHN MAJOR and Baroness Thatcher will speak on the same platform tomorrow for the first time since the last general election.

At a rally of candidates at Conservative Central Office, the Prime Minister by her side, Lady Thatcher will forcefully attack Labour, in a rare show of solidarity with her successor. The appearance of unity will conceal tensions at Central Office over the role of Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, who has been virtually sidelined from the media campaign. With the Tories still way behind Labour in the opinion polls, the joint appearance by the two will provide a much-needed morale boost for the Tory campaign team.

One of Lady Thatcher's supporters said last night: "She is absolutely on side. She is absolutely committed to a Conservative victory. If we were to lose there is no way she wants to be exposed to criticism that her conduct was a contributory factor."

Friends of Dr Mawhinney have complained that he has been overshadowed in the campaign by Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke. Dr Mawhinney has been virtually consigned to a backroom role and to regional tours.

Apart from at Wednesday's launch of the manifesto, he has rarely been seen or heard. He had agreed before the campaign to a downgrading of his media role because of a perception that he is less effective than the Deputy Prime Minister. But he is becoming restless that other Cabinet figures have been making more of the running. His exclusion has led to reports of tension in the Tories' communications department.

Hospital chiefs face sack in red tape blitz

By Jill Sherman

LABOUR CAMPAIGN

HEALTH authority chiefs will face heavy financial penalties and could be sacked under a Labour government if they fail to cut down on bureaucratic waste, Tony Blair will announce today.

Mr Blair will use his adoption speech at Sedgefield to present a new scheme to crack down on unnecessary paperwork and administration in NHS trusts to save money for patient care. League tables would be set up to show which of the 450 NHS trusts in Britain are the most efficient.

All hospitals would be expected to improve their standards to match the best 25 per cent. Those that failed would be visited by hit squads who would carry out quality audits to investigate where administrative and management costs could be reduced.

If the hospital refused to implement these recommendations, the chief executive would lose the performance related element of his pay. Chief executives can earn more than £100,000, of which more than 10 per cent can be in performance bonuses. If this penalty was also ignored, the chairman and/or the non-executive members of the trust, who are appointed by the Secretary of State, could be dismissed.

Mr Blair has already pledged to save £100 million from administrative waste. But today he will make clear that he has far bigger savings in mind, with plans to appoint a new independent "bureaucracy buster" to look at management costs within the NHS. This role, answerable to the Health Secretary, would involve identifying waste and drawing up guidelines for hospitals.

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Women rivals sharpen their claws

Daniel McGrory witnesses insults flying as the battle for Peterborough gets off to a hostile start

ROBIN MAYES

Jacqueline Foster, left, the Tory candidate, and her Labour rival Helen Brinton at the constituency yesterday

AFTER the mock battles between chickens it was a day for geniune confrontation as the rival women of Peterborough bared claws and traded insults on a street corner.

By unhappy coincidence the Conservative candidate Jacqueline Foster and her Labour opponent, Helen Brinton, chose the same time to visit the anniversary celebrations of a community association held in the impossibly crowded front room of a terraced house in the constituency.

Guests were elbowed aside as both women expertly pirouetted in the confined space to ensure they did not have to shake hands, exchange pleasantries nor be photographed together watched over by the city's mayor.

Labour likes to portray Miss Foster, 45, a British Airways stewardess, as trained to calm the nervous traveller — in this case Peterborough's runaway MP Brian Mawhinney, the Tory Party chairman who they accuse of fleeing to a safe seat in next door Cambridge.

"Brian Mawhinney is the biggest chicken in the coop. He has done Labour a huge favour by sending a message that Peterborough is unwinnable for his party so Miss Foster has been sent to hold his hand," Miss Brinton said.

The formidable Miss Foster retaliated that her opponent is a "hypocrite as she gets paid as a teacher at a grant-maintained school and her lot wants to abolish them."

The rivals' next exchange was over their commitment to the city with Miss Foster pointing out she has at least lived in Peterborough long enough to appear on the electoral roll unlike her opponent, who she says "lives in Kent and has only just rented a flat for the duration of this campaign". She added: "There is no love lost between us. I do not respect her. She just mouths what Tony Blair tells her to. If she wants to debate me I will go anywhere, any time, any place."

Unashamedly, she describes Baroness Thatcher as "my absolute political role model" and admits: "I have always been tough. I tried 23 constituencies before I got this place. I am a divorcee with no children which some Tory associations do not care for. I am not bitter about that but then I have never been politically correct. What I am though is the best man for this job.

"I do not need to be told how to dress or how to act like those Labour lady clones, Tony's Spice Girls." She insists her choice of outfit — a well-cut two-piece blue suit — is her normally preferred style. "I always like to be neat and smart."

Apart from a spell living abroad she has been a stewardess since 1971 and warns she will "do damage" to anyone who makes sneering remarks about her being a "trolly dolly".

Her combative streak is needed if the Conservatives are to hold onto this city after boundary changes left the Tories with a notional majority of under 6,000 and a council that recently went to Labour with an 18 per cent swing.

Labour has already had two Cabinet ministers drop into Peterborough this week which is testament to how much effort they are putting in to win this constituency.

Ms Brinton, a 42-year-old mother of two, said as she swept off from the Gladstone Road Association. "The Tories are so scared all they can do is throw insults."

Miss Foster's reply was predictably swift and venomous. "I debate issues and all she does is read a script but if she wants this to be ugly so be it. She will not win."

Mohammad Choudhary, the Mayor, watching this shook his head and said: "I think we are in for a real scrap. I like both ladies though I am a Labour councillor, but may the best man win."

THE CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND

Why the press is reluctant to rave for Blair

Tony Blair discovers few allies and fierce independence in a Scottish press leaning towards nationalism, says **Michael Gove**

TONY BLAIR discovered yesterday that the Scottish press is no friend of his, nor should it be expected to be after his derogatory off-the-cuff remark about Scottish journalists last year.

But there is another reason for the Scottish press's suspicion of Mr Blair. The Scottish media has grown more autonomous from London in recent years, just as Mr Blair has reduced the independence of the Scottish Labour Party by having activists who take a different line removed from its executive and having Scottish candidates selected in London.

Since the decision by *The Sun* to publish a full Scottish edition, newspapers north of the border have striven harder to show their own Scottish colours.

Both the *Mail* and the *Express* have increased their Scottish staff and editorial content, as has *The Times*. In response, the papers previously closest to the Scottish grain, Edinburgh's *Scotsman*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and the *Daily Record*, have had to fight harder to assert their distinctiveness. *The Scotsman* and the *Herald* have responded by taking a more detached line towards new Labour even as England seems to embrace Mr Blair's party.

The *Herald* has positioned itself to the left of new Labour, and its editorial yesterday was sniffy about Mr Blair locating himself in the "radical centre" of politics, concluding that: "Labour's manifesto may well deserve to win an election but whether it will win the longer-term affection of the British people is quite a different matter."

The Scotsman, with Andrew Neil as its Editor-in-Chief, now occupies a space which is still on the left but at a critical distance from new Labour. Since taking over, Neil has laid into Labour's devolution plans, arguing in the words of yesterday's editorial, that "the fact that devolution is a good idea does not mean that every devolution scheme is without blemish. Labour persists in offering a flawed scheme — and one that could still easily be repaired — and it still refuses to answer the West Lothian question. Are we supposed to applaud?"

On the opposing page, *The Scotsman*'s main political commentator, Ian McWhirter, continues the assault, arguing: "Even when we look at Labour's specific deliverable promises we find that, where they are not banal, they come apart."

Even on newspapers committed to new Labour, there is resistance. Many on the Scottish *Sun*, which bore a front-page endorsement of Mr Blair yesterday, were reluctant recruits. The paper was a cheer leader for the Scottish National Party from January, 1992, until the day after the English *Sun* shone on Blair. Even now, some of its staffers prefer nationalism to new Labour.

Its main rival, *The Daily Record*, has always been loyal to Labour, but preferred yesterday to lead on a scratch-card winner's good fortune than Labour's historic manifesto.

Most of Scotland's newspapers will still probably back Mr Blair come polling day, partly in order to secure the separate Parliament so many of them support. But if he disappoints in Downing Street, they will be back to give him going over.

Pact is still on, say Lib Dems

By Magnus Linklater

TONY BLAIR was accused yesterday of undermining the agreement between Labour and Liberal Democrats in Scotland over the creation of a Scottish parliament.

Launching the Liberal Democrat manifesto in Edinburgh, Jim Wallace, the party's Scottish leader, said there was a basic contradiction between the *claim of right* document that both parties had signed in the Scottish Constitutional Convention and remarks by Mr Blair published in *The Scotsman* yesterday.

"Mr Blair seems to be departing from the line that I thought Labour MPs had signed up to when they signed the *claim of right*," Mr Wallace said. He stopped short, however, of saying that Mr Blair had destroyed the pact between the two parties over a Scottish parliament. It remained real and not a sham partnership, he said. But there did seem to be a difference in emphasis. The Liberal Democrats had a "gut belief" in the parliament, which was not shared by new Labour.

This underlined the importance of electing "large numbers" of Liberal Democrats to Westminster. He said their manifesto was the only one "carefully thought out and fully costed" and it would make a real difference to the future of Scotland. The party intended to invest £1 billion in Scottish education by the year 2002, providing pre-school education for all three and four-year-olds and reducing the size of all primary classes to below 30.

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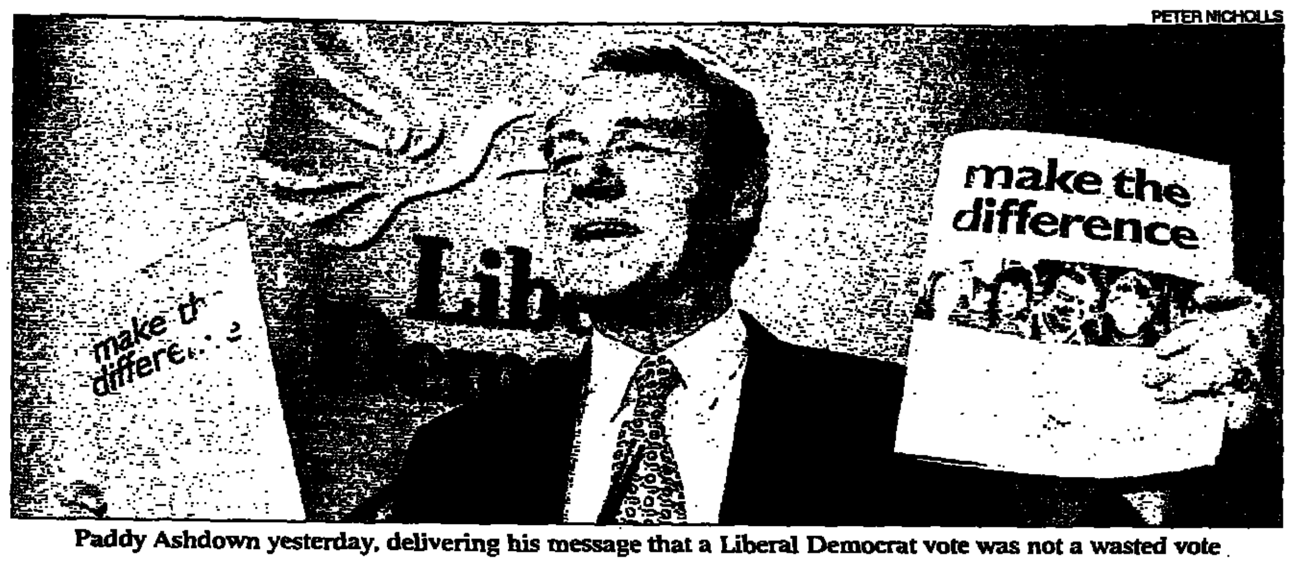
Ashdown plays honesty card with 'tax and spend' proposals

Jill Sherman and Polly Newton report on the Liberal Democrat manifesto

PETER NICHOLLS



Paddy Ashdown yesterday, delivering his message that a Liberal Democrat vote was not a wasted vote

THE Liberal Democrat manifesto, published yesterday, is the most radical of the party documents produced this week, with an ambitious programme of increased public spending, funded in part by an increase of 1p in the basic rate of income tax.

Presenting his party's manifesto, the Liberal Democrat leader claimed that only his party was bold enough to admit that public services could not be improved unless taxes went up. He promised 10,000 extra nurses, 3,000 extra policeman, £2 billion more spent on education, free eye and dental checks and shorter hospital waiting-lists.

"We've got to break the fatalism in our politics. We've got to get this country's 'can-do' spirit back, and there is nothing we cannot achieve," he said.

The Liberal Democrats say that education is their top priority. The age from which local authorities are required to provide schooling would be reduced from five down to three, although attendance at nursery school from three years old would not be compulsory. No child between five and 11 would need to be in a class of more than 30 pupils. There would be extra spending on school books and equipment and on the repair of school buildings.

But soon after the manifesto was published, there was confusion over how much extra tax people would have to pay. The document claims that its proposals would cost taxpayers an average of only 45p per week, a point immediately disputed by the Tories. But Mr Ashdown later admitted that the average earner on £19,000 a week would pay nearer £1.23 a week, and higher earners would pay much more.

Mr Ashdown also had difficulty explaining why one section of his party's document suggests that there will be tax cuts for 95.5 per cent of income taxpayers, which appears to contradict other sections.

Under the overall tax changes, those earning more than £100,000 would face a new top rate of tax of 50p. The basic rate of tax would also go up by a penny from 23p to 24p — to meet the increased spending on education.

But the party also intends to take 500,000 low earners out of income tax by raising tax thresholds by £200 to £4,245. This would be paid for by the new 50p tax rate for high earners. Mr Ashdown later said that while those earning less than £12,000 would pay less tax, those earning more than £12,000 would pay more. Someone on £38,000 a year would pay an additional £2.70 in tax each week.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, claimed that the average taxpayer would pay an extra £2.40 a week.

There was also confusion over the party's plans to phase out National Insurance contributions, as part of pension reforms. Alan Beith, the deputy leader, said: "We will start to phase out the expensive, unfair contributory system and base the right to a state pension on citizenship and residence." Having denied that this meant tax rises, Mr Beith eventually conceded that the policy could lead to a 10p increase in income tax "in the long term", as National Insurance charges were combined with income tax.

The document includes pledges to increase annual spending on health by £565 million and pensions by £265 million a year. It proposes to put 5p on a packed of cigarettes to pay for the restoration of free eye and dental checks and to freeze prescription charges.

Mr Ashdown said a Liberal Democrat vote was "not a wasted vote if you want more investment in your kid's school, if you want more investment to solve the crisis in the hospitals. A Liberal Democrat vote is the only vote you have got."

The Liberal Democrat manifesto will appear in full on Monday

Leading article, page 21

Lib Dems leap in where Labour fears to tread

PETER RIDDELL

The Liberal Democrat manifesto, *Make the Difference*, is something completely different, as John Cleese, a prominent supporter, might have said. But then the party is not playing the same electoral game as the Tories or Labour.

It is not competing for national power, but rather seeking influence by aiming for a few dozen, mainly Tory-held, seats. The question raised by yesterday's manifesto is whether a self-consciously radical, bold programme peppered with commitments to initiatives everywhere is the right way to win over disillusioned Tories.

Where "new" Labour is afraid to tread, Paddy Ashdown delights in leaping. He is not afraid to talk about the need to raise taxes to pay for smaller classes, new books and equipment for schools, nursery education for three and four-year-olds, and reduced health service waiting lists and more doctors and nurses. This candour is refreshing compared with the evasions of the other parties. But its appeal is likely to be limited, though not quite as small as the cynics suggest.

Parents are alarmed at the cutbacks in schools, teachers being laid off and the fund-raising drives for new equipment. Some people may be prepared to pay a *little* more in tax for better public services. This ties in with the Liberal Democrats' parallel campaign for the forgotten elections on May 1, those outside London and the big cities for control of the county councils.

The danger with such costed programmes, as Labour found five years ago, is that everyone can pick apart the details: how many will pay more in tax, and how much? Who will benefit? Mr Ashdown and his colleagues had an uncomfortable few minutes yesterday giving answers — which explains why Gordon Brown has been so critical of the Liberal Democrat stance and avoided such promises himself.

The risk for the Liberal Democrats has always been that they will be squeezed by Labour's strength and move to the centre. The continued high Labour ratings in the polls have led to a shift in the Liberal Democrats' strategy. There is no longer any talk of what might happen in a hung parliament, and the issue of electoral reform was not exactly being highlighted yesterday.

The party has been distancing itself from Labour, and from any hint of post-election deals, emphasising its distinctive approach and contrast with Labour's caution. If, by late April, Labour looks as if it is heading for a landslide, we will probably hear more about the need for an independent party pressing for better schools and so on.

The party needs to retain national visibility to reinforce its regional activities, but it is not yet making headway in the national polls, being stuck around 11 to 14 per cent. Party strategists argue that this is no guide to their core 50 target seats where they are running strongly and, more to the point, a majority believe the Liberal Democrats are the main challenger.

On this view, the Tories are so weak that it does not matter that Labour is currently ten points or so ahead of its 1992 share in these seats. This is a fine balance. The Liberal Democrats cannot afford too strong a showing by Labour in these seats, or else Tory candidates will squeak back in on a lower share of the vote. The party cannot just fight a local and regional campaign. It needs to remain in the national picture. Yesterday's manifesto launch shows how hard it is for the Liberal Democrats to be both radical and credible.

Leaders' apologies cannot hide their delight at being squeezed

MATTHEW PARRIS

PADDY ASHDOWN has hit on a foolproof way of packing Liberal Democrat meetings: hire a small hall. At Church House near Westminster yesterday, in a room probably more modest than the dining room of his campaign supremo, Lord Holme of Cheltenham, a few score journalists jostled with Lord Holme's ego for space in which to breathe.

"I *am* sorry it's so crowded," drawled the noble lord in accents which suggested that even his broom cupboard was bigger. "Thanks for coming," the ever-matey Paddy Ashdown said. "Sorry we're over-crowded." His grin showed that he was not sorry. On one wall Archbishop Cosmo Lang glared from his oil painting as a microphone on a pole teetered perilously close to his Most Reverend nose, the mike's bearer tottering below.

Mr Ashdown spoke, his eyes driven by passion and grit into steely slits. A summary of his words, with bullet-points, was projected onto granite behind him. It was only screen granite. The impression was of receiving a poor man's version of the Ten Commandments from a poor man's version of Moses. Once enunciated, each covenant on the screen degraded — broke up in a computer-simulated snowstorm — and disappeared. Perhaps we were being prepared for the real world, post-May 1, and the politicians' golden calves.

There were questions. Andrew Rawnsley of *A Week In Politics* pointed out that Mr Ashdown had promised to raise income tax, and Mr Blair had promised not to, and both had promised to co-operate. Whose promise, then, was he promising to see broken? Mr Ashdown said it depended on how many votes he got.

The impression was confusing. Confusion deepened when Anthony Bevins of *The Independent* said: "Turn to page 49 of your manifesto. Look at it because it's rubbish." Everyone scrabbled for the page. Bevins and Ashdown squabbled about what seemed to be the implication on the page that taxes would go down when on other pages Ashdown had said that they would go up. Bevins demanded a reprint.

"Ah," Ashdown's helpful deputy interrupted, "but *now* turn to page 61." Everyone did so. Here, said Alan Beith, it explained that although the measures on page 49 brought taxes down, the measures on page 61 brought them up again. Ah!

Confusion deepened further when *The Guardian*'s Michael White said that a Liberal Democrat advertisement in *New Statesman & Society* claimed that taxes would rise by as much as £6 per week. "That was a misprint," Lord Holme said. "And not even a *Guardian* misprint," the owlish Beith chuckled.

The whole occasion was taking on an *Alice in Wonderland* quality. Had the Tory chicken, the *Mirror* fox, the two placard-carrying bears and the South African rhinocerous now swung from the ceiling on trapezes, to add their own ironic comment on the trivialisation of politics, few would have raised an eyebrow. Archbishop Lang stared stonily from his frame.

On Wednesday, John Major unveiled a manifesto which, though not devoid of ideas, breathes caution. His whole campaign insinuates a single theme: "So far so good: don't risk change." On Thursday, Labour's communications teamsters took us aside before their manifesto launch to remind us that there was nothing novel or interesting at all in the document. Tony Blair actually said — or implied — it was all old hat.

To calm me before the launch of his own party's plans, the Liberal Democrat MEP Graham Watson took me aside to tell me: "There's nothing new in them."

All three parties creep around, whispering into every anxious ear: "Don't worry: we have nothing to say." They crouch to conquer.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME

Members of the public are invited to put the questions that matter to John Major and Tony Blair in special meetings with the Conservative and Labour party leaders to be held in central London.

The first Prime Minister's Question Time, with John Major, will take place on Tuesday, April 15. The second, with Tony Blair, will be on Friday, April 25. The two men vying for Downing Street will speak for about 20 minutes before answering questions from the audience.

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WINDFALL PEP

The M&G Windfall PEP

Cherie Booth named legal personality of the year

By Richard Ford, Home Correspondent

CHERIE BOOTH broke off campaigning with her husband in Scotland yesterday after learning she had been named Legal Personality of the Year. Tony Blair's wife travelled to London to receive the award last night.

She was named the winner after lawyers throughout Britain had voted in a contest organised by *The Lawyer* newspaper. Mark Wyatt, the paper's publisher, said Ms Booth had won by a "substantial margin".

However, he refused to disclose any voting figures or who was the runner-up in the competition, which was first held three years ago. The previous winners were Lord Woolf, the Master of the Rolls, and Martin Mears, the former President of the Law Society.

Booth: received award from a trade paper

THE LAWYER

Mr Wyatt said: "We have never given figures. It is not a stitch-up, but giving figures gets very complicated and very embarrassing for the people nominated. It would become a story that Lord Mackay got this number of nominations or that Cherie Booth only got so many."

He said that Ms Booth, who became a QC two years ago, had won the award, a foot square bronze and brass plaque, by an "overwhelming margin". She had deserved the award because she was "juggling career with a very public profile and trying to bring up a family. She is a very good role model."

Suspicions about the voting were fuelled when staff at the weekly paper, which Mr Wyatt said sold 18,500 copies, disclosed that it had been inundated with votes and that the response from the legal profession had been bigger than in previous years.

Mr Wyatt said he not think the competition had been rigged and that Ms Booth was a very popular figure who had had a high profile throughout the year. "Lawyers are very honourable people. There would be no skullduggery by any people involved, at least I hope not," he said.

Mr Wyatt was not even able to disclose the number of people nominated for the award. However, he said the list had included Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, Lord Bingham of Cornhill, the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, the Lord Chancellor, Michael Beloff, joint head of the chambers where Ms Booth works, Dame Barbara Mills, Director of Public Prosecutions, Anthony Julius, the solicitor who acted for Diana, Princess of Wales, during her divorce, and Lord Irvine of Lairg, a close friend of Ms Booth and her husband.

Lord Lester of Herne Hill, the civil liberties lawyer, said he knew nothing about the competition. When told he had been nominated, he said: "Really! I can only assume it was an April Fool. I am amazed I was nominated."

HUW EVANS

Facing the future: Mr Prescott helps James Bell, 4, from Cardiff, to recreate his pose with Tony Blair in the Labour Party manifesto

Labour's Welsh dragon comes home

Valerie Elliott joins a glum John Prescott on his manifesto launch in Cardiff

WHEN John Prescott appeared in Cardiff yesterday to launch Labour's Welsh manifesto, it seemed a less-than-happy homecoming for a son of Wales. Perhaps it was being in the south, far from his Prestatyn birthplace, or maybe it was getting his tongue around the dragon-like phrase *Llafur newydd* — new Labour.

Perhaps he did not relish promoting a manifesto that included a version in Welsh, with even a message from Tony Blair in the language, which he could not understand. Or it could have been just an uncomfortable night in his Cardiff hotel.

Whatever the reason, the man who would be Deputy Prime Minister in a Labour government was decidedly glum as he teamed up with his old Labour chums from the Welsh party. But he surely must have been cheered by the manifesto's promise that the principality would have a minister for children, an innovation which looks set to be denied to youngsters in the rest of the country.

Mr Prescott added another promise, that a Labour government would hold a referendum this autumn on creating a Welsh assembly. But he vigorously defended Labour's decision not to give it tax-raising powers.

Talk of devolution was tricky to deal with yesterday after Tony Blair's local difficulty in Scotland. Unsurprisingly, after less than an hour Mr Prescott bowed out. He will be back in Wales next week but for the moment he seemed pleased that his battle bus was heading for the less challenging territory of Bolton.

He left Ron Davies, Shadow Welsh Secretary, to dismiss talk of splits in the Welsh Labour Party. It is clear, however, that many Labour MPs are not keen on the idea of an assembly. But after much arm-twisting they have promised not to cause trouble. Only Llew Smith, MP for Blaenau Gwent, remains implacably hostile and has written pamphlets opposing the move.

The other main detractor, Allan Rogers, MP for Rhondda, was convinced that an assembly would weaken local government. But he has agreed to work constructively with the party leadership and is writing a report for Mr Davies on how local authorities could benefit from the reform.

The main problem now is that three Labour MPs oppose any form of proportional representation in electing the assembly. Denzil Davies, former Treasury Minister and the MP for Llanelli, said yesterday: "I have always supported a Welsh assembly, I campaigned for it in 1978, but PR is a constitutional issue. We are entitled to express our reservations on it."

His views are shared by Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tidfil and Rhymney) and Sir Ray Powell (Ogmore). They have privately come to a deal with the leadership that they will not vote against the second reading of a devolution Bill but they will speak against PR in Commons debates.

Ron Davies yesterday brushed aside the division. "When the legislation is put before the Commons, I expect full support from each and every Labour MP. It is a matter of constitutional propriety.". He is convincing and seems determined to get his way. This was demonstrated by his grip on the Welsh manifesto, where he was allowed to include detailed policy instead of broad statements. His plan for a minister for children means that one person in the Welsh Office would take charge of all issues affecting the young, from health to education. Mr Davies also promised yesterday a rural policy for Wales.

NEWS

Labour 'chuffed by sale of BR'

Richard Branson, Britain's second-largest rail operator, claimed that Labour was secretly pleased that the Tories had sold off British Rail.

The businessman, who met Tony Blair in private only six weeks ago, said a Labour government would never have dared to sell off the network for fear of incurring the wrath of the Left. "I believe that secretly, they are quite relieved it's happened. I therefore don't think they'll do much to rock the boat." He also told *Railway magazine*: "We can work with Labour."

Tory beaten up

Stuart Andrew, 25-year-old Conservative candidate in the safe Labour seat of Wrexham, was beaten unconscious by a gang shouting anti-Tory slogans in Beaumaris, Anglesey. His father Andrew, 52, had his skull fractured when he went to his aid.

Monster struggle

The Official Monster Raving Loony Party is struggling to field the 50 candidates it requires to qualify for a party political broadcast on television. Party leaders, who have 40 candidates, admit that they have no idea what message they would convey.

Sacré Blair

The flagship newspaper of the French Right, *Le Figaro*, heaped praise on Tony Blair on Friday for not promising too much in his ten-point "contract with the people", for pledging not to increase income tax and to freeze public spending for two years.

Election turn-off

Viewers have deserted the BBC's *Nine O'Clock News* since it doubled in length to provide extra time for election coverage. According to unofficial figures, 4.3 million people watched Wednesday's news, finishing at 10pm, compared with an average of six million.

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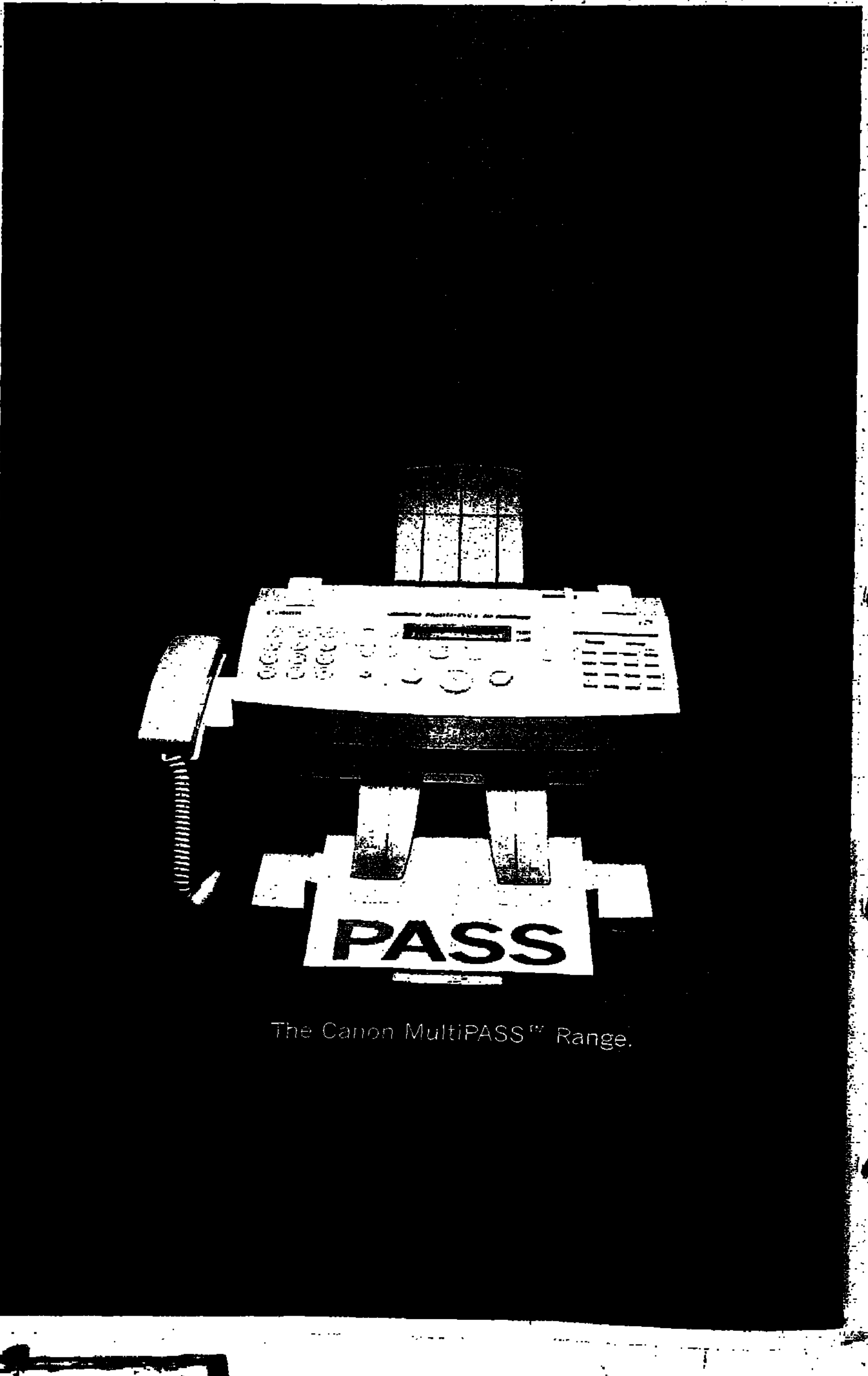
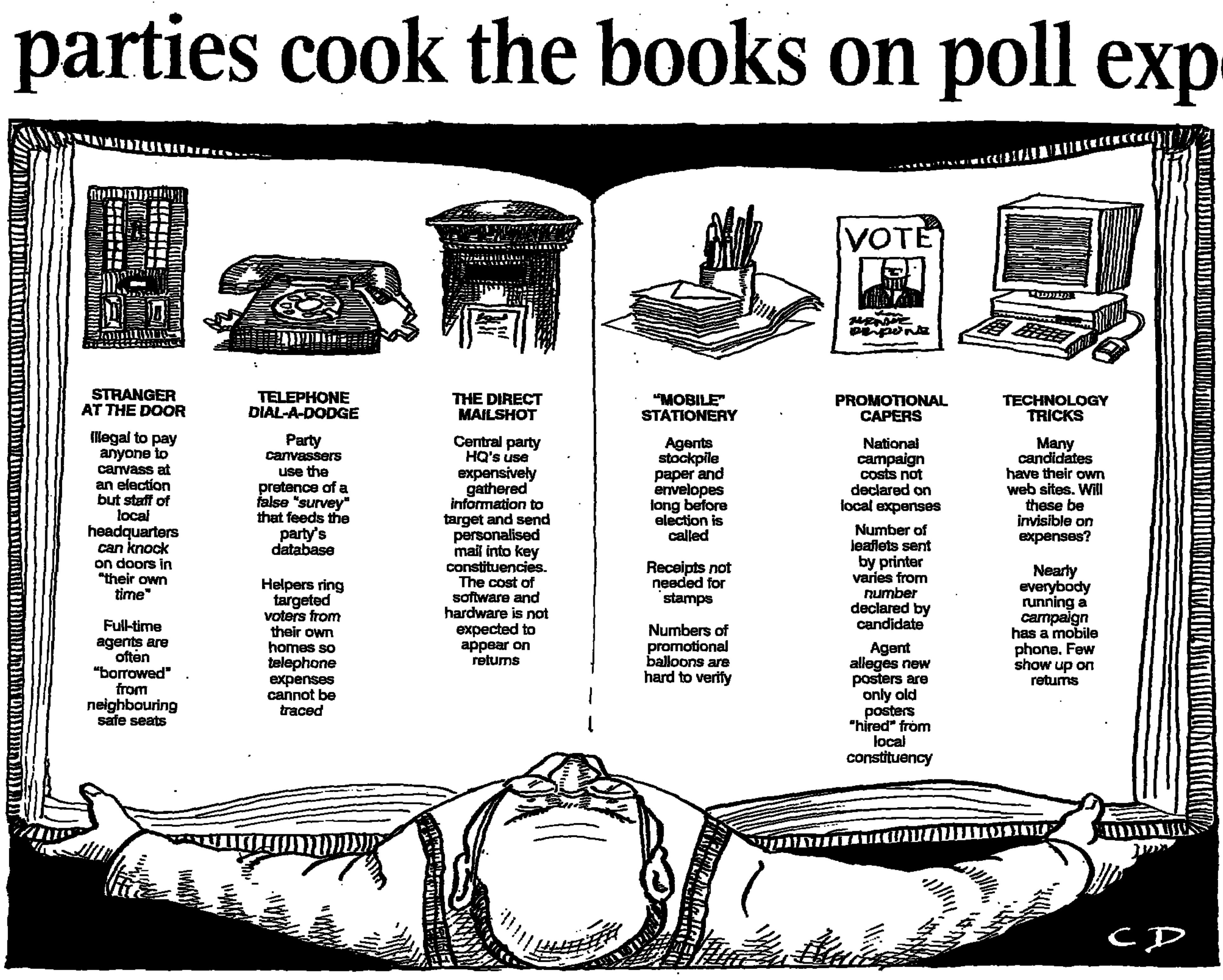


هكذا من الاصل

Dominic Kennedy and **Valerie Elliott** describe ruses which help some candidates to steal a march

How parties cook the books on poll expenses


VOTE
STRANGER AT THE DOOR
Illegal to pay anyone to canvass at an election but staff of local headquarters can knock on doors in "their own time"
Full-time agents are often "borrowed" from neighbouring safe seats
TELEPHONE DIAL-A-DODGE
Party canvassers use the pretence of a false "survey" that feeds the party's database
Helpers ring targeted voters from their own homes so telephone expenses cannot be traced
THE DIRECT MAILSHOT
Central party HQ's use expensively gathered information to target and send personalised mail into key constituencies. The cost of software and hardware is not expected to appear on returns
"MOBILE" STATIONERY
Agents stockpile paper and envelopes long before election is called
Receipts not needed for stamps
Numbers of promotional balloons are hard to verify
PROMOTIONAL CAPERS
National campaign costs not declared on local expenses
Number of leaflets sent by printer varies from number declared by candidate
Agent alleges new posters are only old posters "hired" from local constituency
TECHNOLOGY TRICKS
Many candidates have their own web sites. Will these be invisible on expenses?
Nearly everybody running a campaign has a mobile phone. Few show up on returns
CD

THE British electoral system is the envy of the world: to stop a rich man buying his way into Parliament, the law prevents a candidate spending more than about 7p on wooing each voter.

Expense returns have to be submitted after polling and are open to inspection. They must be within limits of about £8,300 for a typical seat.

In the marginal constituencies which decide each election, however, the parties bend the rules. Although the punishments are harsh, including a £5,000 fine, a ban on voting and on sitting as an MP, the chances of being caught are slim.

According to a Labour activist, a long-standing gentleman's agreement has been operating between his party and the Conservatives to stop them reporting each other. A Tory campaign veteran said: "You don't often get complaints because all the parties are indulging." Only twice in the past five years have people been prosecuted on charges of breaking the rules, and both were acquitted at Crown Court.

Here is *The Times*'s guide to election agents' creative accounting.

☐ **The stranger at the door.** The meter for each contender's election campaign starts ticking when he or she becomes the official candidate. From that moment, everything spent should be included on expenses. How do challengers make themselves known to the public before the campaign begins? A wily Tory in a no-hope seat says: "There's nothing to stop me from turning up, introducing myself to constituents and saying that I am the local party convener, or researcher."

☐ **The telephone survey.** A stranger calls. "They do not let on that they are ringing on behalf of a party," says Professor Ron Johnson, of Bristol University. "The implication is that this is just another poll." The information is sent to the party's computer database, matched with the electoral roll and stored for future use. When it comes to getting voters out on polling day, the Conservatives have recruited elderly women after learning that older voters were annoyed by being told what to do by the young. The Liberal Democrats and Tories have both given supporters the numbers of voters in key constituencies to ring from their own homes. The calls cannot be traced, so why include them in expenses?

☐ **The mailshot.** The Conservatives have been assembling a secretive scheme called Programme for Identifying and Influencing Key Electors, developed by Keith Britto, former deputy director of special services at Central Office. This computer programme uses information such as whether people are shareholders, own cars or have bought their council houses, and it forecasts their likelihood of being Tories on a scale of one to ten. "It is remarkably accurate," says John Stanyer, ex-Conservative vice-treasurer in Hazel Grove, where it was used as an experiment in 1992 and helped to secure victory for Sir Tom Arnold by 900 votes. Labour's database is so advanced that, if education becomes an issue, it can send personalised letters to parents of school-age children in key marginals within 24 hours. Only the parties know how many targeted letters have been sent from head office. The cost of software and hardware is not expected to appear on returns.

☐ **Flying agents.** Why waste a full-time agent on a safe seat when there is a key marginal next door which needs some extra help? Why tell the returning officer that the agent is being paid £30,000 a year?

☐ **Stamps.** These are the one cost which can be mentioned on expenses without producing a receipt. One Conservative agent spent £7,000 on postage in his constituency at the last election; it was never declared.

☐ **The Internet.** Dozens of candidates now have their own Web sites. Will these appear on expenses?

☐ **Posters.** The agent buys a new set of posters for every election, costing about £2,500. He puts only about £400 on expenses, saying that the posters have been "hired" from the local constituency association and are the same ones which were used last time.

☐ ***The party leader's visit.*** Entertaining the leader, or a celebrity, probably costs £80 a day in travel and feeding expenses, but only £20 will be declared.

☐ ***Empty houses full of supporters.*** In the tightest of contests, estate agents have been paid £50 to stick posters in homes which are vacant. This is illegal.

☐ **Billboards.** A national advertising campaign such as "demon eyes" will not usually be declared on local expenses. If large clusters of billboards appear in the most marginal seats, so be it.

☐ **A bulging stationery cupboard.** Agents stockpile paper and envelopes long before an election is called. If they bought it during the campaign, the receipts would have to be submitted.

☐ **Fuel.** Some agents succumb to temptation in rural seats where fuel is a big expense and fail to account for all the petrol used in ferrying candidates to villages and voters to polling stations.

☐ ***Battle buses.*** The hire of a bus and driver for weeks would cripple most campaigns. Trade unions have been known to "lend" a bus to a Labour candidate.

☐ **Balloons.** Buy 2,000, declare 1,000. (Try counting balloons.)

☐ **The generous printer.** Supposing an agent ordered 5,000 leaflets and the printer sent 20,000 back. It is hardly the agent's fault, is it?

☐ **Videos.** Campaign videos cost about £2 each. Sending one to every home in a constituency would breach expenses many times over.

☐ ***Mobile phones.*** Nearly everybody involved in running a campaign will be carrying a mobile phone. Few returns mention them.

☐ **Photocopying.** Out of leaflets? Helpful business supporters can take one to their offices and photocopy a few hundred each. No charge.

☐ ***The blind eye.*** An agent is legally responsible for all expenditure. In the last days of campaigning, many party workers will appear in a close-fought constituency. "You are not God," said a seasoned campaigner. "You cannot see everything."

Labour last to submit receipts

By Russell Jenkins and Carol Midgley

THE Labour Party kept officials waiting until the eleventh hour last night to submit expense receipts for the Wirral South by-election.

Won by Ben Chapman for Labour, it was widely regarded as the most costly by-election political campaign in recent history and led to allegations that both major parties had exceeded the legal spending limit of £31,113.15 each. On the day of the poll on February 27, the UK Independence Party lodged a formal complaint with police over the amount allegedly spent by Labour and the Tories.

The deadline to hand in expense declarations expired at the end of the working day yesterday, 35 days after polling day. David Leonnard, senior electoral registration officer, had been telephoned twice by a representative of the Labour Party to ask what time he left to go home.

At 4.15pm — 45 minutes before the deadline — a Labour Party worker walked into Wallasey Town Hall to hand over the expenses report in a brown envelope. It stated that Labour had spent £29,299.96 on its campaign.

The Conservative Party, which submitted its details on Thursday, also declared itself well within the limit at £27,822.59. Anthony Samuelson, of the Stop Conservatives Poncing on Tobacco Companies party, who polled 124 votes, had spent £18,319.77, mostly on legal costs. Flo Lucas, for the Liberal Democrats, declared expenses of £13,790.42.

Yesterday David Lott, national organiser for the UKIP, said he would continue the complaint with police. Merseyside Police said the returning officer had to determine whether a police investigation was necessary.

Big spenders may be holding back for a final flourish

Labour has matched Conservative spending on pre-election advertising, but there is plenty of time left for extravagance, **Michael Pinto-Duschinsky** writes

AMID the psychological warfare between the party headquarters, secrecy and misinformation about their election budgets is rife. Talk of the imminent bankruptcy of Conservative Central Office alternates with reports of a general election kitty of no less than £40 million.

Although academic researchers should not expect accurate information until the campaign is over, one can reach reasonably reliable conclusions while it is in progress by examining the amount of advertising commissioned. In recent elections, national publicity has accounted for up to two-thirds of central Tory expenditure and up to half of Labour's campaign costs.

A survey by advertising industry sources shows that, in the 14 month run-up to the election (January 1, 1996, to February 28, 1997), the Referendum Party was the only really big spender. Its 128 pages of national press advertisements and its posters cost more than £5.5 million in rental charges alone. The Conservatives spent just under £3.4 million and Labour about £2.4 million. The Liberal Democrats' operations were too insignificant to appear on the advertising industry's radar. These sums exclude the Referendum Party's distributions of videotapes, as well as direct mailshots by the main parties.

As demonstrated in 1987, when the Tories lavished £3 million on a four-day burst of advertising in the week before polling, opportunities for extravagance remain. Yet, so far, the contest between the Conservatives and Labour turns out to have been considerably less costly than expected.

In the past, when a Prime Minister has left calling the general election to the last moment, campaigns have been exceptionally expensive. That might account for the caution of the Conservatives, whose deficit in the opinion polls provides ample incentive for publicity. Maurice Saatchi has clearly imitated Beau Geste, of the French Foreign Legion, who concealed his limited firepower from the enemy.

The "Yes it Hurt. Yes it Worked" and "New Labour. New Danger" campaigns were financially modest efforts to raise controversy and, with it, free news coverage. Despite announcements by Brian Mawhinney of the improvements in Central Office finances, there was virtually no Tory poster advertising and only £700,000 of press advertisements in the first ten months of 1996.

While Central Office narrowly outspent Millbank in pre-election advertising, the cost of Opposition propaganda balances that of the Tories when account is taken of the "non-party" campaigns such as that run by the TUC.

The narrow spending gap between the two main parties contrasts with past elections. In 1987, Tory spending on its national poster and press publicity came to £6.4 million, nearly three times Labour's £2.2 million. In 1992, the Tories outspent Labour by £5.8 million to £3.3 million.

When inflation is taken into account, today a Tory campaign on the scale of 1987 would cost £10 million. Last month, for which detailed statistics are not yet available, saw a blitz of posters but almost no advertising in the national press. Talk of a £40 million campaign is way off the mark.

As to whether advertisements are effective in winning votes, there is no clear evidence. The most crucial factors appear to be coverage on television and in the news columns of the tabloids, and party election broadcasts. It is here that the Liberal Democrats have their chance.

☐ *Michael Pinto-Duschinsky is a senior research fellow at Brunel University.*

ELECTION SPENDING

Central Party spending on national press and poster advertising at ratecard, 1.1.1996 — 28.2.1997

	National press ads.		Posters	TOTAL
	Pages	Cost	Cost	
Referendum Party	182	£4,199,000	£1,371,000	£5,570,000
Conservative Party	29	£ 945,000	£2,412,000	£3,375,000
Labour Party	22	£ 540,000	£1,865,000	£2,405,000

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FEATURE
The father, the son.
Valerie Grove interviews novelist Martin Amis.

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Bonn and Paris break EU ranks on China rebuke

FROM PETER CAPELLA IN GENEVA

WESTERN policy on Beijing is in disarray as a result of Germany joining France in publicly rejecting action for the first time against China by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The issue has divided the European Union and is expected to dominate a meeting of foreign ministers beginning in The Netherlands tomorrow. The meeting has been called to discuss the future of a common foreign policy.

The annual session of the 53-nation UN rights body ends in Geneva on April 18. Although an EU resolution criticising abuses in China has failed for the past eight years at the final *hurdle of a vote, rights groups* view the gesture as the last chance to demonstrate international concern before Hong Kong reverts to China.

"While there may be a last-minute effort by a few individual European countries and the United States to salvage a resolution, the West's spineless deference to China out of concern for commercial contracts has all but killed the resolution before it is tabled," said Lotte Leicht, a director of Human Rights Watch.

Britain will support a resolution that is likely to be introduced next week by Denmark or The Netherlands. In the wake of Chinese threats of retaliation, Britain has adopted a low profile in Geneva and is anxious not to anger Beijing by taking a lead. Diplomats hope to extract further guarantees on Hong Kong's future before the handover on July 1.

In a letter last Monday, Hans van Mierlo, the Dutch Foreign Minister, told the other 14 members that the credibility of a common foreign policy was being undermined. He added that The Netherlands, the current EU president, would no longer propose any joint initiatives on human rights. The letter also hinted at "a double standard" on the issue.

> ❛ Beijing has repeated promises of progress for eight years without result ❜

This has angered France. Then, on Thursday, Germany also announced that it rejected action against China. Both Paris and Bonn support critical dialogue and claim that previous confrontations have been unsuccessful. They have been the chief advocates of a common foreign policy and have, however reluctantly, supported criticism of China in previous years. Paradoxically, diplomats now accuse them of burying any remnants of European solidarity on foreign affairs.

President Chirac of France is to make a state visit to China next month in response to the visit to Paris by Li Peng, the Chinese Prime Minister, during last year's UN commissioner's meeting. This time, among other trade deals, defence equipment and a £1.2 billion Airbus order are high on the agenda.

In spite of strong public statements of concern, Bill Richardson, the American Ambassador to the UN, earlier this week also declined to lead the attempt to censure *China. Like Britain, the Uni*ted States will back a resolution, however, and is lobbying behind the scenes to counter Beijing's charm offensive among smaller nations.

American companies, including Boeing, secured several contracts in China during Vice-President Al Gore's official visit last month. Campaigners fear that the Chinese "carrot and stick" policy has been successful.

In an attempt to placate its critics, Beijing said it was "seriously examining" signing two key international covenants on human rights. But the statement, used by France as evidence of progress in China's attitude, has been repeated every year since the mid-1980s with no result.

AP / SEIJI NOMURA

The Hale-Bopp comet photographed over the 12,388ft Fuji, Japan's highest mountain, with an 85mm lens at f2.8 for 30 seconds on 1,600 ISO film

Colony completes guest list

FROM CATHERINE FIELD IN HONG KONG

ARDUOUS efforts to draw up the guest list for the party to end all parties have at last borne fruit: those lucky enough to be invited to Hong Kong's handover ceremonies should be getting their invitations shortly.

Britain and China are close to finishing a 4,000-strong guest list for the event, a British official confirmed last night. The two sides have agreed to send out invitations to 400 VIPs at foreign minister level, 1,500 invitations each to other guests, and another 600 to the media and others, the official said.

"The guest list will cover countries and international organisations with which Hong Kong has close ties. Invitations will be extended to foreign ministers and heads of *international* organisations," said Jonathan Lange, spokesman for the handover office.

Foreign ministers rather than heads of state will make up the largest group, a sign that Peking had succeeded in downgrading the ceremony, diplomats said. Britain will be represented by the Prince of Wales, who will deliver a speech on behalf of the Queen. Baroness Thatcher, who negotiated the agreement sealing Hong Kong's return to Chinese sovereignty, will be among the dignitaries.

The Hong Kong Government has earmarked £18.5 million for the ceremony, £1 million of which will go on hotel rooms and transport for heads of foreign delegations.

Beat poet Ginsberg has cancer

New York: Doctors have given Allen Ginsberg, the American writer and beatnik, four to 12 months to live after discovering that he has inoperable liver cancer (Quentin Letts writes).

Ginsberg, 70, washed around in his youth with Jack Kerouac and is one of the last survivors of Kerouac's slim-hipped *On the Road* gang of *idle Fifties pioneers of permis*siveness. He is "taking the news like a good Buddhist", say friends.

The unconventional and prolific poet, who has championed most things from homosexuality to hallucinogens, was in bed at home in Manhattan yesterday. Although "weepy at times", he was talking about impending death and meditating about the ultimate experience.

The best known of Ginsberg's writings is probably *Howl*, a 1956 *poem* which mourned the scrambling of a generation's minds by drugs. He was sometimes called "the most dangerous man in America".

Russians vote to keep loot

FROM ROBIN LODGE IN MOSCOW

IN A rare show of defiance, Russia's lower house of parliament yesterday overturned a presidential veto on a Bill declaring all works of art seized by the Soviet Army from Nazi Germany to be Russian property.

The Bill, which had been passed by a strong majority in the Communist-dominated Duma and by the upper house, the Federation Council, was *vetoed last month by* President Yeltsin, who said it violated international law. It contradicts an existing agreement between Russia and Germany, calling for a negotiated settlement of the art problem.

At stake are some 200,000 works of art, including paintings by Goya, Delacroix, Van Gogh and Renoir, seized from museums and private collections in Germany by the victorious Soviet forces.

Among the most priceless *artefacts* are the *golden* treasures excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy in the 19th century. Estimates vary about the overall worth of the collection, but it is generally believed to run to billions of pounds.

To overturn the presidential veto, the 450-member Duma needed a two-thirds majority vote. In the event, 308 deputies backed the motion with only 15 voting against. It will now be up to the Federation Council to confirm the decision, for which it too will require a two-thirds majority. While the Communists hold less sway in the upper house, the growing strength of nationalists suggests that the motion will pass, unless government lobbyists succeed in convincing members of the damage such a move would cause to Russia's now excellent relations with Germany.

A Trojan gold cup seized in the war

If both houses overturn the veto, Mr Yeltsin's only recourse is the Constitutional Court, *where he can appeal* within seven days. If the court rejects an appeal, he will have to sign the bill into law.

Aleksandr Kotenkov, Mr Yeltsin's personal representative to the Duma, said he was concerned that the law could *jeopardise talks between Rus*sia, The Netherlands, Poland and Germany on restitution of art works.

Many Russians take the view that they have a right to the art, as reparations for Soviet cultural losses suffered *when Hitler's troops ram*paged through the country, looting and burning churches and palaces. Tens of thousands of works of art were seized by SS battalions dedicated to taking the treasures back to Germany.

For nearly half a century after the war, the bulk of the art seized during the war remained hidden, its existence a secret. But in the early 1990s, the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg began a series of exhibitions of the booty, including several previously unknown or forgotten works by French Impressionists.

The exhibitions, which were hailed as further evidence of the new Russian authorities' openness and willingness to shed the Cold War attitudes of the past, attracted tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world.

*They also reopened the sen*sitive issue of restitution. A commission was set up to try to resolve the problem under the Soviet-German Friendship Treaty of 1990, which declared the basic principle of mutual restitution. But virtually no *headway has been made since* then, with no Russian politician willing to take the political consequences of being seen to give way to German demands.

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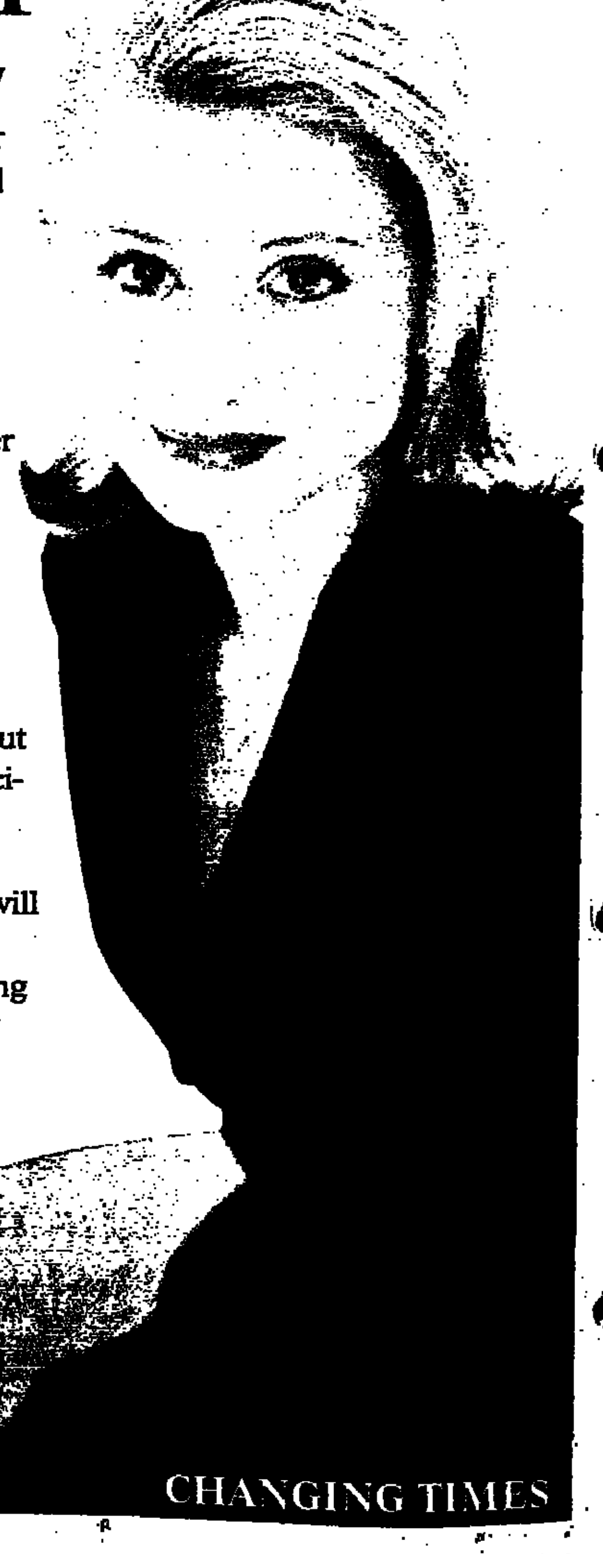

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Mobutu's slide from power signals end of the line for Africa's Big Men

FROM SAM KILEY
IN JOHANNESBURG

ENVOYS from President Mobutu of Zaire are due to meet rebel leaders today for ceasefire talks which will signal the end of the 31-year rule of one of the continent's last Big Men, and deep concern among his contemporary African potentates.

Kenya's President Moi, faced with elections later this year, banditry in the north and a crime wave in the cities, will be among the most nervous over the outcome to today's talks in Pretoria. "Moi looks set to win the elections. But what is really bugging him is that a rebel movement dedicated to overthrowing a dictatorship has been enthusiastically backed by the outside world. He is worried that his regime could be the next one to topple," a Western ambassador in Nairobi said.

Zairean rebels this week rejected an offer of six Cabinet seats from Etienne Tshisekedi, the newly appointed Prime Minister. Having swept up a third of the country in an almost bloodless campaign, they are poised to march unopposed into the mineral rich provinces of Kasai and Shaba. The rebels are likely to press their demand for Mr Mobuto to step down.

Mr Mobutu, 66, and Mr Moi, 73, are among the last members of a generation who have ruled with the absolute power of tribal chieftains, harnessing the national coffers to fund a system of corruption and patronage to ensure loyalty. When this has failed, they have resorted to violence. Mr Mobutu had hundreds of political opponents killed and tortured in the years after he came to power in 1965.

Mr Moi has been more subtle, but Robert Ouko, his arch-rival and Foreign Minister, was murdered in mysterious circumstances in 1989. Richard Leakey, the conservationist and secretary-general of the Safina opposition movement in Kenya, lives with the constant fear of assassination.

Having been seen by Western powers as vital defenders of capitalism during the Cold War, the continent's autocrats are now seen as men whose time is past. In place of them is a new breed, mostly men who took power in civil wars in the 1980s and 1990s, but have been carefully coached and backed by Washington ever since. At the centre of this new breed is Uganda's President Museveni, who has weathered criticism for his refusal to allow political parties to campaign in Uganda because he has fulfilled the "good governance" requirements of donor nations — commitments to respect human rights, stamp out corruption, and clean up his administration.

So too have Eritrea's President Aferwerki and Ethiopia's President Zenawi. These three, all former guerrillas, are now among the main backers for Laurent Kabila, the Zairean rebel leader. They are also much hated by President Moi, who has seen his regional influence wane as his friends have been pushed out of power.

Among the first to fall was the Rwandan Hutu regime of Juvenal Habyramana whose widow now lives in Nairobi.

Mr Moi, deeply unpopular having amassed a fortune to rival the $9 billion (£5.6 billion) held by his friend Mr Mobutu, is under no threat from armed rebellion. But recent upheavals in Kenya's universities which spread to Nairobi and Mombasa have caused many observers to wonder how tight Mr Moi's grip still is. "People in this country will take note of what has happened in Zaire and have already started to talk of an 'uprising'," a leading opposition figure said yesterday.

☐ **Lubumbashi:** Rebels entered Zaire's diamond mining capital of Mbuji-Mayi yesterday, sources in the region said. The town was "in the process of changing hands", one mining source said. Most Government troops had fled in vehicles stolen from a state-owned mining company after they looted the businesses of diamond dealers. *(Reuter)*

Democrats hit by Cuba connection over cocaine cash

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE Democrats' controversial fundraising antics entered Caribbean waters yesterday with claims that a prominent Miami businesswoman, hoping to influence US policy towards Cuba, had solicited a $20,000 (£12,000) party contribution from a drug smuggler while in Havana.

Congressional investigators have discovered that Vivian Mannerud, a prominent Democratic fundraiser, invited Jorge Cabrera, a cocaine trafficker later convicted on narcotics charges, to make the donation in exchange for an invitation to dine with Vice-President Al Gore.

Cabrera and the Miami underworld have already emerged in the fundraising scandal which dogs President Clinton's second term. However, the Cuba connection, in which Ms Mannerud is said to have solicited money at a meeting in Havana's Copacabana Hotel, caused a stir in Washington yesterday.

Republicans firmly opposed to any thaw in relations between America and Fidel Castro's regime have focused on the meeting and the source of the Cabrera donation as part of planned hearings into irregular Democratic fundraising practices. They are most interested in Ms Mannerud's alleged comments to Cabrera that she needed the money to elevate her status among Democrats in the hope of improving diplomatic links between Cuba and America.

On his return to America days after the two met, Cabrera wrote a cheque for $20,000 to the Democratic National Committee, which included the proceeds of cocaine trafficked from Colombia to south Florida. Within two weeks he had been invited to dinner with Mr Gore in an exclusive Miami suburb. Ten days later the smuggler attended a Christmas reception at the White House hosted by Hillary Clinton.

Cabrera, currently serving a 19-year sentence, had used his family fishing fleet as a front for drug peddling. Accused of serious drug offences twice in the 1980s, he was arrested three weeks after the White House party, charged with importing 6,000lb of cocaine through the Florida Keys and fined $1.5 million.

Previously he had been photographed at both Democratic events with Mr Gore and Mrs Clinton, causing acute embarrassment to the White House when the pictures were released in October last year. The party since has swiftly returned his suspect donation.

"Once we found out about Mr Cabrera's past, we immediately returned the money," said Amy Weiss Tobe, an official for the committee. "We feel we have put this behind us."

In an interview with *The New York Times*, Ms Mannerud said she could not remember soliciting the donation from Cabrera in Cuba and denied any ulterior policy motive. "People said I saw him for about five minutes," she said. "I can't imagine sitting at a table in Havana soliciting money for the Democratic Party. Who has time for that?"

However, Stephen Bronis, Cabrera's lawyer, said she had targeted his client for funds and they had discussed at least one thing in common — both had met Señor Castro.

More importantly, the lawyer claimed she had indicated the need to gain credibility in the party as a means of improving stagnant relations between the Communist regime and the Clinton Administration. "She believed it was in the best interests of Cuban-Americans of her generation if the United States normalised relations with Cuba," said Mr Bronis.

America first imposed a trade ban on Cuba in 1963 and the embargo was strengthened five years ago to prohibit subsidiaries of American companies from doing business with the Communist island.

Last year, under the terms of the Helms-Burton Act signed by Mr Clinton, sanctions were tightened further, punishing foreign companies which did business in Cuba and provoking a trade war with the European Union.

Renault workers protest at lost jobs

FROM REUTER
IN BRUSSELS

BELGIAN riot police clashed yesterday with Renault workers who marched through Brussels in an attempt to save their jobs and force European governments to increase employment protection.

The police turned water cannon on the demonstrators, who hurled stones, eggs and fireworks, brandished wooden and steel staves and tried to tear down barbed wire barricades.

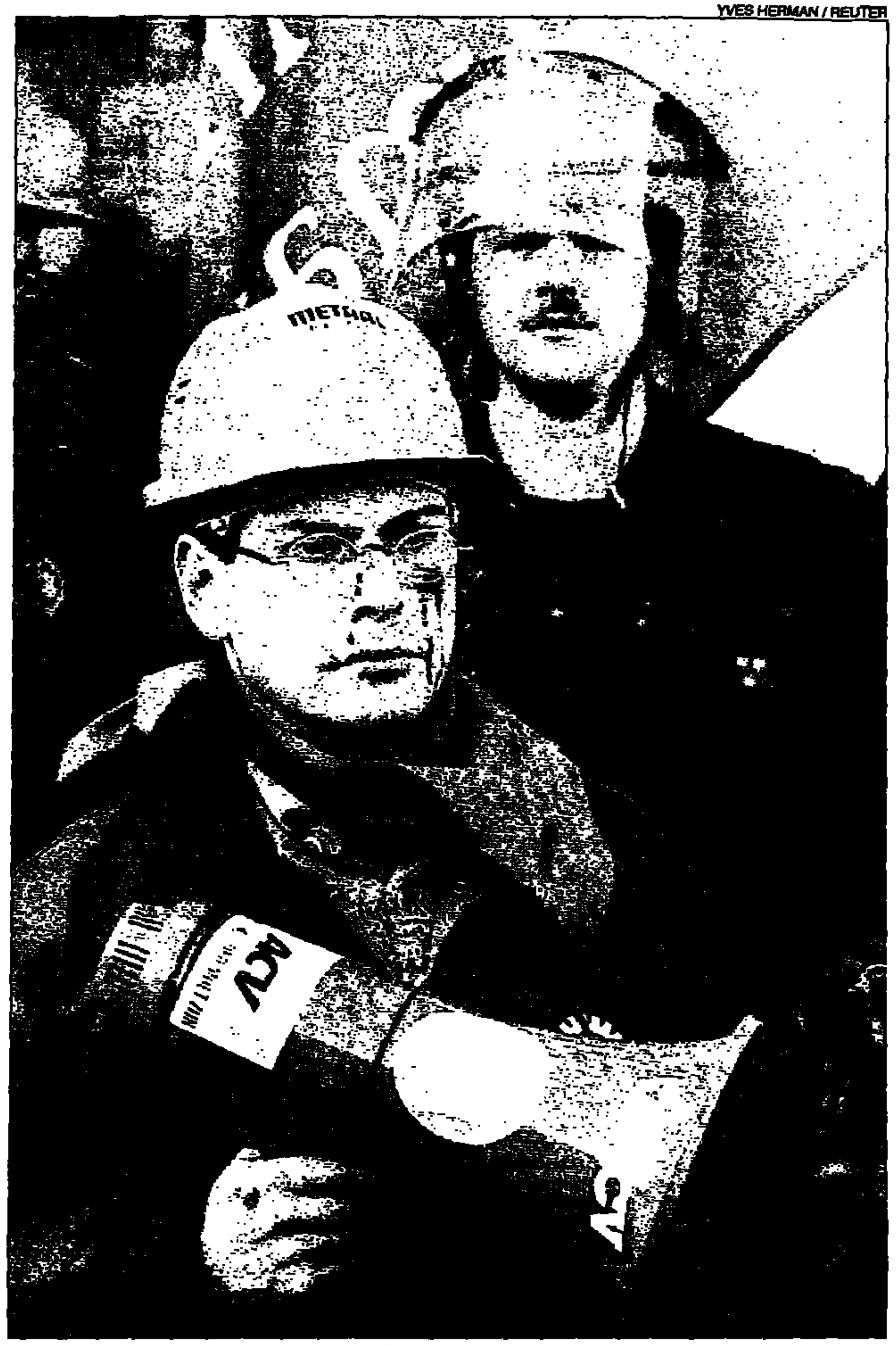
The Renault workers were joined by delegations from France and Spain and the bankrupt Belgian steel firm Forges de Clabecq. Police estimated the numbers at 1,000.

They moved from the Flemish regional government buildings to the Belgian parliament and then on to the headquartyers of the European Commission. There were no reports of serious injuries or arrests.

There has been a rash of protests in Belgium and France since the French carmaker announced in February that it would close its profitable plant at Vilvoorde, near Brussels, in July, with the loss of 3,100 jobs.

The workers, who have occupied the plant and held cars worth billions of francs for ransom, received a boost on Thursday when a Brussels court ruled that Renault had broken the law by failing to consult its employees. The company says that the closure will go ahead.

YVES HERMAN / REUTER



An injured demonstrator in front of an egg-spattered Belgian policeman yesterday

Netanyahu weighs up airborne onslaught

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER
IN JERUSALEM

THE need for an urgent US initiative to save the Middle East peace process grew yesterday as Israeli-Arab violence erupted for the sixteenth day and Israel said military action was being considered for the first time against Islamic cells in areas of Palestinian control.

The Tel Aviv daily *Yediot Aharonot* disclosed that undercover Israeli troops had arrested a nine-strong Hamas squad planning attacks.

In the West Bank city of Hebron, Jewish settlers fought back with stones against a crowd of 400 Palestinians who attacked their homes with petrol bombs. Israeli troops used teargas and rubber-coated bullets, leaving 16 Arabs and three Israelis wounded.

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, is coming under growing pressure from rightwingers to take tougher action. Yesterday it was disclosed that at a private meeting of his Likud party the Prime Minister said he was considering all options, interpreted as a warning that action will be taken if more suicide attacks are launched by Hamas or Islamic Jihad.

Israeli sources said measures under review included helicopter commando raids on suspected militants, killing of Islamic leaders and deportation of suspected bombers.

Mr Netanyahu also threatened military action against the Palestinian Authority unless it implemented a crackdown on Islamic guerrillas.

WORLD IN BRIEF

South Africa 'has 1.3m rapes a year'

Johannesburg: A United Nations report claims as many as one in ten of South Africa's female population — 1.3 million women — are raped each year (Inigo Gilmore writes). The UN human rights report, published this week, claims that this number is 36 times higher than the official figure because victims fail to report the crimes, police believe. The apartheid legacy of mistrust of the police, the report says, is largely to blame. Mark Shaw, of the Institute of Security Studies, while acknowledging that rape is on the rise, sounded a note of caution on the figure. "The point seems to be that rape is an extension of violence in a violent society."

Orphan demands revenge

New York: Lukas Dainys, eight, whose parents were shot dead on Easter Sunday, said he wanted revenge on their killer (Quentin Letts writes). The son of Lithuanian immigrants was orphaned when his parents were shot in the head while relaxing in their home. A colleague of Mrs Daniys has been charged with the shooting. Lukas, who was sleeping when the killings occurred, told the *New York Post*: "When he gets the electric chair, I want to press the button to kill him." The Dainys arrived in America only eight months ago.

Albanian deployment set

Rome: An Italian-led multinational security force is expected to begin deploying in Albania from April 14, the Foreign Ministry said here after a first meeting in the city of senior diplomats from the eight countries that have either pledged troops to the operation or have said they are considering taking part in some other way. The statement confirmed that General Luciano Forlani of the Italian Army has been appointed to command the force. *(Reuter)*

Letters, page 21

Father yields on $17m estate

New York: The father of Hollywood child actor Macaulay Culkin yielded control of the 16-year-old's $17 million (£10 million) estate. Kit Culkin, 51, and Patricia Brentrup, 41, the mother of his five children, managed the acting careers of Macaulay and his siblings before they split. Mr Culkin said he did not wish to contest custody. Miss Brentrup will have control of her children and their money until they are older.

Rehearsal for peace force

Nyanga, Zimbabwe: About 1,500 soldiers from nine southern African armies — some of them longtime foes — began 14 days of joint military manoeuvres in mountainous eastern Zimbabwe that could lead to the formation of a joint peacekeeping force for African trouble spots. Civil war in Zaire is just one example of threats to the region. *(AP)*

Alan Greenspan with his partner, Andrea Mitchell

Greenspan invests in long-term bond

FROM QUENTIN LETTS IN NEW YORK

WITH the markets safely closed, the chairman of America's Federal Reserve, Alan Greenspan, will tomorrow marry his long-term investment, Andrea Mitchell.

Mr Greenspan, 71, will wed Miss Mitchell, 50, in a quiet ceremony in Virginia. The groom is expected to allow himself a brief burst of "irrational exuberance" (his recent description of the Dow Jones index) before he returns to his desk on Monday morning.

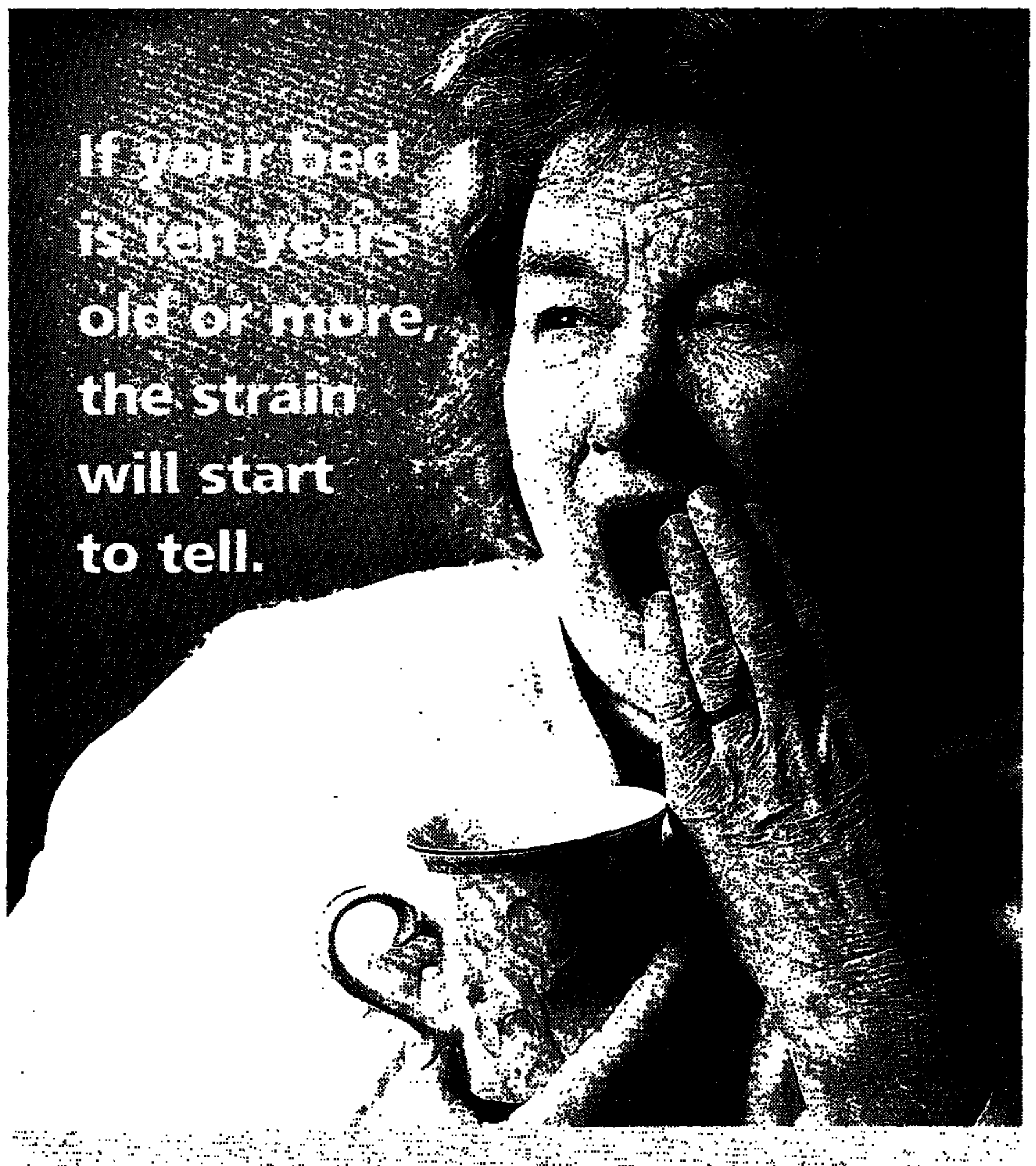
He and his fiancée, a journalist he has courted for 12 years, are "too busy" to trifle with a honeymoon. She must attend to the demands of a career in television. He has the global economy to run.

Up and down the East Coast of America, the power set are watching Mr Greenspan's merger with something he understands all too well: interest. Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State, this week threw a party for the couple at Mortimer's, a handsome Manhattan restaurant where the assembled crowd was probably worth more than the combined wealth of several African countries.

For the wedding, about 75 guests will observe the clinching of the most important deal in the life of the veteran banker. They will include Barbara Walters, the permagrin media queen and a previous Greenspan step-out who, with everyone else, will be shuttled to the wedding by humble bus (note the curb on spending) from Washington DC's Jockey Club.

The Federal Reserve chairman proposed to Miss Mitchell on Christmas Day — a quiet day on the markets.

Leading article, page 21



You can't defy the ageing process – and there is no point taking it out on the ones your love. Why should they put up with you being irritable, restless and snappy when you are literally lying on the problem. A bed that is ten years old or more may not be giving you the comfort and support you need for a good, healthy night's sleep. Lack of quality sleep will blunt your appetite and enthusiasm for everyday living. The answer could be a new bed. As the Sleep Council says – "sleep good, feel good". So if your bed is feeling the strain as much as you are, get along to your local Sleep Council stockist now. The rest will take care of itself.

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Insurers sue ailing Julie Andrews

New York: Julie Andrews, 61, is being taken to court by the insurance companies that issued cover for her current Broadway show. American Insurance Group and associated companies claim the actress was less than honest about her health record when insurance was taken out for the hit musical *Victor/Victoria*, in which she stars.

Taking insurance proved a wise precaution, since Ms Andrews has had a bad time with her health and voice. She has missed performances, having contracted sore throats, coughs, gall-bladder difficulties (which required surgery), laryngitis and exhaustion. Such is her drawing power that when she is absent from a show Broadway fans demand refunds, presenting the insurers with bills that they are reluctant to pay.

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, the insurers have faced payments totalling £1.6 million (£1 million), with possibly more to come.

Ms Andrews has received high praise for the way she has performed in the musical, but the former young star of *The Sound of Music* and *Mary Poppins* is only human, and her ageing bones have creaked under the weight of her demanding role. She is currently confined to near silence during off-stage daylight hours to rest her voice.

Norway's leader followed a strong woman into power and found misfortune had British echoes

Great Mothers' boys

OSLO FILE

by PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

IF John Major and Thorbjoern Jagland, the Norwegian Prime Minister, ever met they would find they had much in common. They both came to office relatively young, succeeding immensely strong women, and have suffered by comparison; they both coined a slogan intended to define their premiership and saw it blow up in their hands; and both have seen their Governments undermined by resignations and ridicule.

Mr Jagland took over the Labour Party and the premiership last October from Gro Harlem Brundtland, Norway's Great Mother figure. She had been Prime Minister for ten of the previous 15 years. Her resignation, for family reasons, was as traumatic for Norway as Margaret Thatcher's demise was in Britain, and at the time far more widely mourned. Many Norwegians said they felt orphaned by her departure.

At first Mr Jagland exploded his grey man image by cramming his new Government with exciting and unusual appointments. They did not last long. He made a succesful crime novelist, Anne Holt, Justice Minister. She resigned in March because of ill health. Grete Faremo, one of the most important women in the Cabinet, in charge of Norway's prodigious oil resources, was forced out in December over a spy scandal dating back to her time in the Justice Ministry under Mrs Brundtland.

Then Mr Jagland created a super-minister's post for Terje Roed Larsen, the architect of the highly regarded Oslo channel for Arab-Israeli peace talks. His role was to invest Norway's colossal oil revenues — Norway is the second largest oil exporter in the world after Saudi Arabia — to create a fund to support Norway's lavish welfare system when the oil runs out and to build up Norwegian industry. He lasted three weeks before ten-year-old tax irregularities caught up with him.

AFP

Thorbjoern Jagland, who has seen his Government undermined by resignations and ridicule

Mr Larsen's legacy from his brief *stint in government was the phrase Det Norske Hus*, the Norwegian House, to define the Government's aims. *Det Norske Hus* is built on four pillars: a sound economy; an efficient welfare system; strong foreign relations; investment in *arts, science and education.*

Just as "Back to Basics" was for Mr *Major, however,* the phrase has become a metaphor for failure. *Det Norske Hus* is regularly described as being flooded, structurally flawed, needing an extension, or as a flop house for politicians to check in and out of during their short *tenures in office. It seems not to* matter that in economic and social terms, Norway is considerably better off than most of its Scandinavian neighbours. Luckily for Mr Jagland, unlike Mr Major he has time to repair the damage and will face a divided Opposition when defending his minority Government in September's elections.

Winters of deadly discontent

NORWEGIANS are reluctant to admit to the stereotype that they all wander through the winters drunk and suicidal. But occasionally they give way. Driving through the town of Alta, above the Arctic circle, my guide pointed to four houses. "Four years ago a teenage boy killed himself in that first house. The next winter a teenage boy killed himself in the next house. The next two winters two more boys committed suicide in the next two houses." Was this a dark Norwegian joke? "No. We are very worried about this winter."

Cantona heads a winner

THERE are 23,000 official Manchester United supporters in Norway. You are as likely to see a child wearing an Eric Cantona cap in Olderfjord as in Old Trafford.

"We sell about £350,000 of Manchester United-related kit each year in Norway," says Ole Pederson, who runs United's Scandinavian supporters' club. "We have 4,000 more members than the Liverpool fan club, and we have thousands more unofficial supporters."

Every Saturday since 1969, an English game has been broadcast on Norwegian television. Ole Gunnar Solksjaer, the Norwegian striker who plays for United, is part of the reason for the club's current popularity, though he is eclipsed by Cantona. "We had a Treasurer in the Government once who was a Tottenham Hotspur fan," says Mr Pederson. "He didn't last long."

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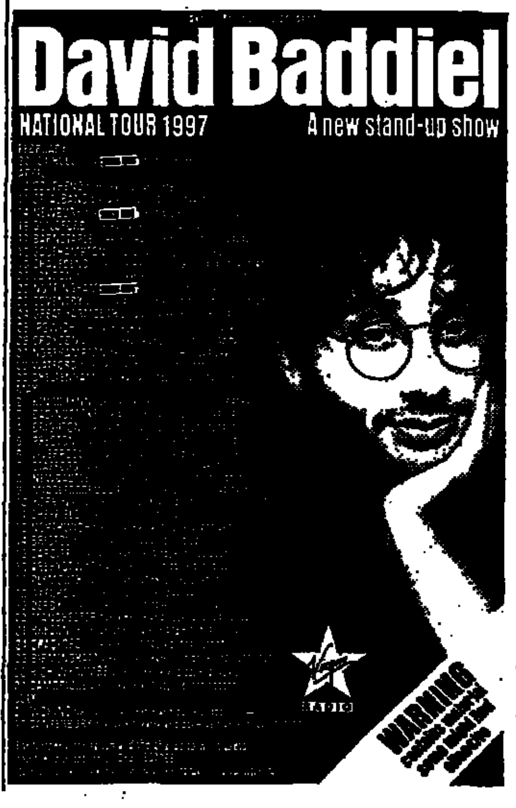


Call to push for return of Gibraltar

RESEARCHERS at a Spanish think-tank that was headed by Eduardo Serra from June 1993 until he was appointed Defence Minister last May have called on José Maria Aznar, the Prime Minister, to establish a special unit in his office to "recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar" (Giles Tremlett writes).

A report commissioned by the Madrid-based Institute for International Questions and Foreign Policy says: "The existence of a British colony on Spanish territory is like a cancer."

The report calls on Señor Aznar to set up a special unit to renegotiate the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht by which Britain gained sovereignty over Gibraltar. It says Spain should aim for a negotiated settlement that will take into account the interests of the citizens of the Rock. But it adds that this is secondary to the main objective, which *must be to recover Spanish* sovereignty over Gibraltar.

European nations sign ban on human cloning

FROM GILES TREMLETT IN OVIEDO, SPAIN

TWENTY European countries yesterday signed what was hailed as the first international convention to control research into human genetic engineering and cloning.

The Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, signed in Oviedo, Spain, forbids the use of genetic engineering techniques for anything other than medical purposes and effectively bans human cloning.

"It stops people toying with the human genome to make sure, for example, that their descendants all have blonde hair and blue eyes," said an official from the Council of Europe, which has masterminded the convention.

The accord also specifically bans the production of human embryos exclusively for research purposes and prevents parents using in vitro fertilisation techniques to choose the *sex of their children. It further* bans the commercial trade in human organs. Western and *Central European countries* signed, including France, Italy and Spain. But Germany refused to, declaring that the convention is not strict enough. "They have not forgotten the traumas of the eugenics research of the Third Reich," the official said.

The election campaign prevented Britain from signing. John Major's Government had been expected to sign, but the next Health Secretary is expected to turn his attention to the matter.

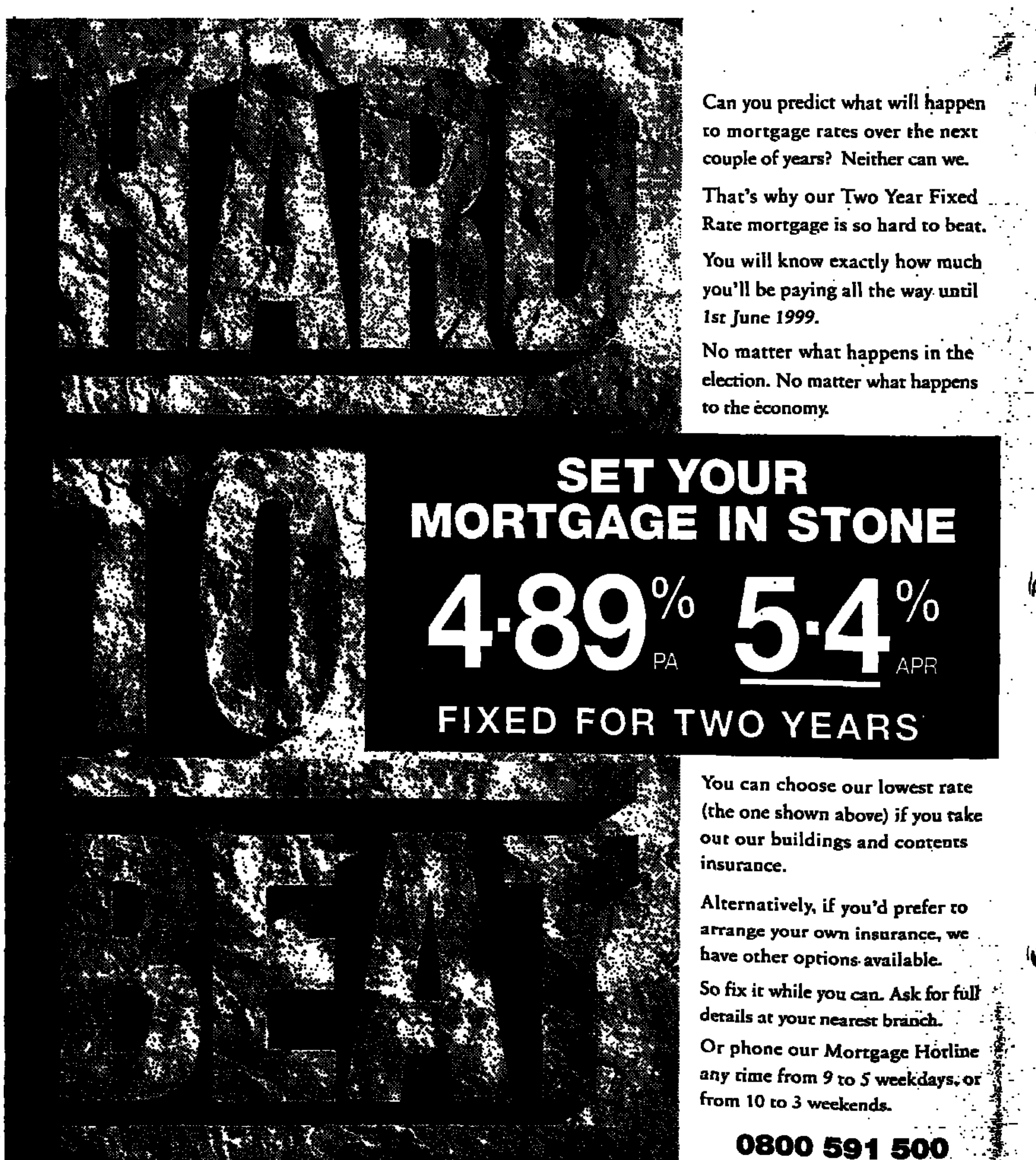
The convention includes a strict declaration on a patient's right to be fully informed on the consequences of any medical intervention and to refuse that treatment. It also protects individuals from being discriminated against on the basis of their genetic make-up. Daniel Tarschys, the coucil's Swedish Secretary-General, *said the convention established the principle that the interests and welfare of a human being should prevail* over those of society or science.

Mr Tarschys gave a warning, however, that European biomedical companies could easily get around the convention's restrictions by carrying out experiments in Third World countries without legislation to control research.

"It is not enough just to promote new laws in developed countries," he said. "The widest possible international accord is needed."

The convention creates a basic agreement on the limits of biomedical research across Europe but does not prevent individual countries passing stricter domestic legislation.

Mr Tarschys said he hoped the council's 20 remaining members would sign the convention over the coming months. America, Japan, Canada and the Holy See have *also reserved the right to* become signatories.



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■ OPINION

House of disarray: why Covent Garden took so long to sort out its season

■ THEATRE

Child's play: demands grow for a National Children's Theatre to be established

THE TIMES ARTS

■ MUSIC

The centenary of Brahms's death is marked, in subdued style, at the Wigmore Hall

■ ON MONDAY

Reviews of Eternal at Wembley, and a rare show of Turner watercolours

Bottom place in the Tony awards

WEEK IN THE ARTS

RICHARD MORRISON

Who said that great fiction was dead? Back on January 31, speaking at the *South Bank Show* Awards, Tony Blair declared that the arts are "not an add-on, or something we just talk about on page 24 of the manifesto: they are central to our vision of a decent and good society". Gosh, how the assembled luvvies cheered those heartwarming sentiments! I even jotted them down on a menu, so that I could contemplate them in moments of spiritual crisis.

So has Tony been as good as his word? Well, this week Labour published its manifesto. The good news is, its arts policy is not buried on page 24. The bad news is, it's buried on page 30, just behind details of Labour's "longstanding commitment to angling".

In a 13,000-word manifesto, the arts bit runs to 174 words, and this includes a bizarre sentence about "new quality assurance in hotel accommodation". New Labour; same old philistines? So it seems.

Still, if you list those 20th-century politicians who took a keen interest in culture (Stalin, Hitler, Ceausescu . . .) you have to conclude that the traditional approach of the British ruling classes — total artistic apathy — is probably safer.

Now, what's going on at the Royal Opera House? The footlights are on, but is anybody home? Has that Titanic among theatres clamped down, Albanian-style, on all contact with the outside world?

You may well ask. Covent Garden closes for its famous redevelopment in three months. For a decade its bosses have been dimly aware (and dim is the word) that the Royal Opera and Ballet would need other venues for two years. They considered Drury Lane, the Lyceum, even a temporary theatre by Tower Bridge. They thought they had a gentleman's agreement with the Albert Hall. But nobody actually did the deals. The years flew by. And the fury of Covent Garden's patrons grew. After all, if you are regularly spending hundreds of quid on tickets, you expect to be kept informed. Strange quirk of human nature, that. The disarray culminated this week when a press briefing was suddenly postponed.

Well, yesterday Covent Garden confirmed at least some rumours. The Royal Opera will indeed spread its wings to the Barbican, Albert Hall and Shaftesbury Theatre. The Royal Ballet will tread the exotic boards of the Labatt's Apollo. And the melancholy but brilliant Bernard Haitink will stay on as music director until 2002, to general relief.

So why all the delay? First, it seems, the opera house's technicians — never Britain's jolliest workforce — threatened to strike. Their union, Bectu, claimed that performances in Hammersmith constituted a "tour". Tours, as you may have guessed, trigger a whole new astronomy of extra payments. The management's response — that a trip of ten stops down the Piccadilly Line hardly qualifies as one of the world's epic journeys — cut little ice.

Secondly, Covent Garden was still arguing this week with the other venues about whose box office sells the tickets. The point is less academic than you might think. If other venues sell tickets, they will gain access to Covent Garden punters: the country's most affluent theatregoers.

Thirdly, some of Covent Garden's biggest patrons are getting twitchy about whether they will receive the same tender loving care in alternative venues as they do in the Crush Bar. The answer is that they won't. This has caused tears in some quarters. More delay.

And lastly? Well, no Covent Garden saga would be complete without "star turns". Just as Covent Garden thought it could announce Albert Hall performances of Gounod's *Faust* with Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu, opera's "golden duo" pulled out. "We are well used to Mr Alagna and Miss Gheorghiu changing their minds," an opera house spokesman says wearily. "We have contingency plans." But more time has been lost.

The trouble is, every hitch generates more contempt for Covent Garden, particularly overseas. It's good that the opera house has finally gone public on at least some plans. Nevertheless, the whole closure business has been grotesquely bungled. Let's hope that the redevelopment itself is better managed. With £78 million of lottery money invested, the public expects competence.

Finally, do you know what time it is? It's exactly 1,000 days before the millennium, that's what it is — and in Greenwich last night they unveiled a giant clock to tick off every blinking milli-second to Milli-Day. And if you think that's a pathetic waste of money, then I don't think you have quite grasped the patriotic aspects of the exercise.

The fact is, the Greenwich authorities are paranoid about being left behind on December 31, 1999. How else can you explain the desperate historical note they have issued? "According to the Resolution of the 1884 International Meridian Conference, Washington DC," it drones, "it was agreed that the universal day would begin at midnight on the Greenwich Meridian. Therefore, by international decree, the Prime Meridian at Greenwich is the point from which the millennium will begin."

Nice try, chaps, but hopeless. What are they going to say in Australia on December 31, 1999? "Hey, put the bubbly on hold! It may be midnight here, but according to the 1884 Meridian Conference we cannot celebrate for another ten hours." I think not.

What's more, Paris also switches on its Countdown Clock this weekend. And since Paris keeps European time, it will presumably reach the millennium precisely one hour ahead of Greenwich. Will our Gallic friends wait courteously before starting the party? Well, what do you think? Not in a thousand years.

Play time for children

THEATRE: Plans are afoot to lure children out of the house and into the theatre. Simon Tait reports

In the dark: a schoolboy takes part in an English Shakespeare Company workshop

They are the forgotten audience — the ten million or so schoolchildren between eight and 15 who, directors and playwrights believe, have been disenfranchised as theatregoers.

For them, theatre is either pantomime, dramatised national curriculum texts, or what both funding authorities and venues dismiss as "youth theatre", an unpredictable box-office test even when professionally performed, but which is more often than not done by amateurs.

But now the call is out to address what Michael Bogdanov calls "this national scandal" with a full-blooded National Children's Theatre, a permanent centre for not only the receiving of tour groups but also the nurturing of writers and designers, and the training of directors of children's plays.

Nicolas Kent, artistic director of the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn which has just got £2 million from the lottery to develop itself for new audiences, says the Tricycle has always had children's theatre as one of its mainstays, and audience enthusiasm has gradually built over the past four years.

"We're doing workshops for children as young as 18 months, which is pretty rare here, but in Europe — Italy, Germany, Scandinavia particularly — the provision of theatre for children, rather than theatre that adults feel they should have, is a national duty."

Jude Kelly of the West Yorkshire Playhouse has long been an advocate of children's and young people's professional theatre, but has never had the funding to pursue it.

"Adults must be educated to the fact that almost any good theatre is enjoyed by children from the age of nine," she says. "Young people are very discerning with their own tastes in music, TV, fashion — and theatre, if they get the chance."

In June there is to be a come-all-ye forum to thrash out the whole question, out of which is likely to come a National Lottery proposal.

Among the most vociferous at the get-together will be Bogdanov, who has resurrected the English Shakespeare Company for the current tour of his children's production of *Beowulf*, in tandem with a darkly fascinating new *Midsummer Night's Dream*, now halfway through its nationwide itinerary.

"Children have consistently been unrepresented in touring," he says. "They are not part of theatre priorities, and they have not been treated as part of the community or of society. I think it's appalling that they're still being offered *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Snow Queen*, *Sleeping Beauty* and so on, because that's what theatres can get funding for."

There are, of course, theatres specialising in children's work, such as the Unicorn and the Polka, but their productions rarely tour and their shows tend to be aimed at the more captive under-eights.

The problem with older children, Kent says, is prising them away from computer games and Saturday morning television, a difficulty shared by the ESC: while box offices have been satisfactorily high for weekday performances during the tour, there has been a palpable drop on Saturdays.

Tony Fagan of the London International Festival of Theatre (Lift) says it is a matter of perception. Last year Lift staged a highly successful education festival and found a sophisticated audience not only ready to see theatre aimed at them, but to participate. "A permanent centre properly resourced and with a high profile could make the most fundamental difference," he says.

The Royal National Theatre has gone some way towards taking the lead. This summer sees the second BT National Connections festival of new plays for young people which will feature work by the likes of Wole Soyinka, Bryony Lavery, Naomi Wallace, Simon Bent and Liz Lochhead. But these are one-acters specifically for young amateurs to produce and perform and, at an hour's length, will almost certainly never see professional treatment.

"I would love to have a parallel festival of professional theatre for young people, but the financial implications are impossible to take on with existing funding," says Susie Graham-Adriani, head of the NT's education department.

There is undoubtedly an audience, she says, and the professional expertise to satisfy it, but the writers, directors and actors have never had the resources to create the work.

"There has been a phenomenal output of children's literature in the past ten years which shows a degree of sophistication in the market, but somehow this has not happened for plays," Jude Kelly says. "Children are now part of the leisure scene — even pubs have to cater for them now — and it's high time this was stretched to theatre. It doesn't have to be stretched far."

In tune with the old curmudgeon

CONCERT

Brahms Centenary
Wigmore Hall

THE difference between the Wigmore Hall's light-filled anniversary celebration of Schubert and this sombre Brahms evening was palpable. Brahms was, after all, no Son of the Muses, rather a growly old German bear who died convinced his place in musical history would be comparable to that of Cherubini.

We love to hate him: Nietzsche, revealingly, wrote of his "melancholy of impotence". Or perhaps we hate to love him, still embarrassed by the complex and contradictory integrity of the man, revealed in Graham Johnson's *Viennese Requiem* with the International Songmakers on Thursday.

The evening began somewhat diffidently, with a sequence of songs that, to paraphrase the criticism of one of them by a close friend of Brahms, seemed composed more out of skill than out of the heart's blood. But it rose to a fluent re-creation of the composer's last years, months, days.

This compassionate re-creation was done in vintage Songmakers style. Soprano Geraldine McGreevy and contralto Ingeborg Danz incarnated in song Brahms's relationship with his two "angels of judgment", Elisabet von Herzogenberg and Clara Schumann, whose criticism, approval and love were so vital to his writing.

The young contralto Ingeborg Danz's *Wie Melodien zieht es mir* and *Meerfahrt* were high points of the evening. So was Johnson's accompanying: aptly barking and tetchy in *Kein Haus, keine Heimat*, and then thrilling to the fresher air of a handful of songs he sneaked in by Schumann and Wolf.

Johnson made a persuasive case for Wolf's little satire on music critics — the *Abschied* ("Farewell") in which the fateful hack is kicked downstairs — being pointed directly at Eduard Hanslick (Wagner's Beckmesser) and, indirectly, through their friendship and through a specific musical reference to a canon in the *First Piano Quartet*, to Brahms himself. Baritone Stephen Varcoe relished the notion in performance.

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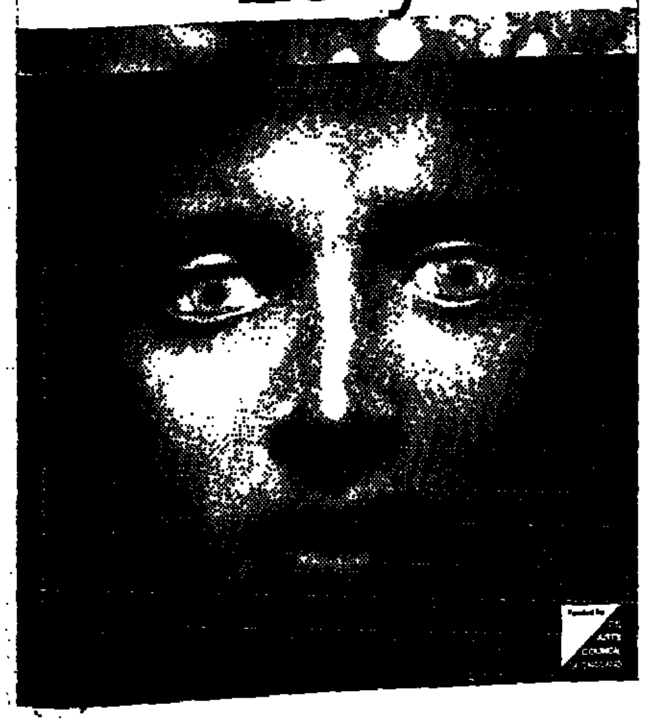

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The power and the glory of conjunctions

No words are more emotive than 'but' or 'and', says **Derwent May**

What is the most sentimental word in the English language? The answer is the word "but". I realised that when I started writing the Nature Notes for *The Times* some years ago. If I wrote "Violets are coming out. Few trees are in leaf yet," I was merely giving the reader information. However, if I wrote "Violets are *coming out but few trees are in leaf* yet," I was charging the whole scene with emotion, manipulating the reader into a melancholy feeling of winter being slow to go.

Furthermore, if I wrote "Few trees are in leaf yet but violets are coming out," I was doing the opposite: cheering the reader with the feeling that spring was already on its way.

As the Nature Notes were meant to be a bulletin rather than a burst of lyricism, I have been sparing of the "buts" ever since, or sometimes, perhaps, have cheated slightly by juxtaposing observations to give a mild "but" effect.

Shakespeare knew the power of "but". Of his 154 sonnets, 18 have a closing couplet that begins with a "But" (as well as quite a number of "Yets"):

But if the while I think on
thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows
end.

However, these are far more than sentimental "buts". They set a whole swirl of passionate emotion into movement, reinforced by the rhythmic pause before them and the clinching rhymes that follow. They are among the most glorious "buts" in the language.

Shakespeare also explicitly remarks on the power of "buts" and "yets" in *Antony and Cleopatra*. When the messenger brings Cleopatra the news that Antony has married Octavia, but is too frightened to tell her, and stammers out: "But yet, madam —", Cleopatra takes the full measure of those monosyllables.

I do not like "but yet", it does
allay
The good precedence; fie upon
"but yet!"
"But yet" is as a gaoler to bring
forth
Some monstrous malefactor.
Prithee, friend,
Pour out the pack of matter to my
ear.

"And" is a quite different story, and this, too, struck me when I was writing for *The Times* recently — a review of a book by the great champion of the Surrealists, André Breton.

About one of the essays in the book, I first wrote: "This is one of the liveliest accounts of boyish rebellion and nihilism I have ever read." But that, I knew, was weak — and it was the fault of the "and". To link "rebellion" and "nihilism" in that way was slack and inexpressive. I changed it to "... *one of the* liveliest accounts of rebellious, boyish nihilism I have ever read".

With that, I hoped, I had achieved a quite different effect. Two abstract nouns slopping about in no sort of relation to each other had given way to a tiny, evolving picture.

So "and" is a dangerous word, and can be a killer. Yet it has other powers. Even as a bare, bald linking word it can make an effect — what the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* calls "connecting occurrences of the same member to express continuous repetition".

The Bible gives the best instances of that. "And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram begat Amminadab. And Amminadab begat Nahshon, and Nahshon begat Salmon" is pretty boring, it has to be admitted. But imagine it *without* the "ands". They are what give a great deal of the King James Old Testament its rolling grandeur.

"And" can be more subtle, though. If used in the right way, it can create anticipation and sweep the end of a sentence up into an awesome climax, as in A. E. Housman's poem in praise of a mercenary army:

Their shoulders held the sky
suspended;
They stood, and earth's
foundations stay.

Imagine that second line without the "and". That simple little word is what gives their meaning and force to the great words that follow it.

Another example, since we have been talking of early spring, is in Wordsworth's lines on that subject.

The budding twigs spread out
their fan
To catch the breezy air,
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

Again the "and" in that third line is where the emotion floods in and turns what follows from a statement of belief into an impassioned assertion that nature is sentient.

To shift the focus somewhat, I have been looking at the three main party manifestos in the light of *these thoughts. Manifestos do not* like the word "but". The words that follow a "but" may make some bold claim about what the party will do, but the emotional charge of "but" works in both directions. So the words that come before the "but" — which are probably an admission of some merit *on the part of the other* side — get a boost too.

There is an apt German saying here, "*Die Sache hat ein Aber*" — "The case has a but in it". One can hear John Major and Tony Blair both saying to their manifesto writers: "But me no buts". In fact, the Conservative manifesto is fairly discreet with them. In Mr Major's foreword there are two sentences beginning with "But". Both follow a statement of good things that the Government has done, such as decreasing the role of the State and increasing the role of the State, and both promise more of such good things: "But now we have the chance...", "But now we must build on..." In both cases the "But" is slightly dangerous because it throws emphasis back on the fact that not enough of these good things have been done.

Three-letter words work far harder than four-letter words

The Labour manifesto is more risky. There is a dramatic "But" in Mr Blair's first paragraph — "But I believe Britain can *and must be better*" — which gives a good deal of retrospective emphasis to the suggestion that Britain is pretty good already.

Even more dangerously, a whole paragraph soon afterwards begins with "But": "But we have liberated these values from outdated dogma." That "but" certainly reminds *the reader both that there* are Labour values that are not exclusive to them, and that they have not themselves done too well by those values so far...

There are few "ands" in either of those manifestos. Manifesto writers understand that little word's killer effect. Bold assertions and *promises have to stand on their* own. They can go weak at the knees when yoked together.

Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats, as far as I can see, do the best job of keeping both these unreliable little landmines out of their text. At the beginning of their sentences they stick to a dull but steady repetition of "We will..."

In fact, three-letter words work far harder than four-letter words — and sometimes as much by their absence as their presence.

By *their* "ands" and *their* "buts" shall ye know them.

For many politicians, there is only one race that matters today, says **Geoffrey Wheatcroft**

Statesmen of our national turf

A hundred years ago, the Grand National was won by a horse with a political ring to its name. Manifesto ran in eight Nationals in all, was third three times and won twice, with a mere 11st 3lb in 1897, and 12st 7lb two years later. And, four days before the last general election, Grand National was won by Party Politics.

Politics and racing have, after all, been connected on and off almost since Charles II. The two share a nervous atmosphere. Each is a *contest in which the hot favourite* sometimes wins — but sometimes falls at the last fence — and both are tinged with skulduggery. Part of the very vocabulary of politics is sporting. Steeplechasing is a direct descendant of fox-hunting, whose whippers-in give their name to government or opposition whips, however much that thought might distress "antis" in the Labour Whips' Office.

The Times has just reported that a Blair government may not after *all make parliamentary time for a* Bill to ban hunting. No doubt unconnected with that — although the phrase was unconsciously fascinating — Tony Blair said yesterday that "we have shot the Tories' fox" over devolution. I doubt whether he has ever shot or hunted a fox.

The House of Commons is a less sporting place and duller than in the days when the Grand National *was as keenly awaited at Westmin*ster as the Budget. In a happier age, Parliament adjourned on Derby Day (when, according to that cynical Liberal, Sir William Harcourt, an Irish MP's vote cost "a fiver, and £10 in Derby week").

No prime minister has ever owned a winner of the Grand National. But, just over a century ago, Lord Rosebery achieved a feat unique in several respects. He won the Derby not once but twice, in successive years, with Ladas in *1894 and Sir Visto in 1895. The odds* against any man owning back-to-back Derby winners are long enough; to win the race twice within what was no more than 15 months' premiership was fantastically improbable. To many Liberal Nonconformists, a leader who owned racehorses was little better than a voluptuary.

Lord Rosebery could have made *matters better or worse with the* horse of that name: if he never owned a Grand National winner, it was bad judgment rather than luck. He owned the well-bred colt, Voluptuary, who won several good races on the Flat as a three-year-old. Carelessly sold by Lord Rosebery, Voluptuary was trained as a steeplechaser, and won the 1884 Grand National as a six-year-old before going quaintly on to another career: the stage. The actor Leonard Boyle bought him and rode *him night after night in the* Grand National scene of *Prodigal Daughter* at Drury Lane.

No British prime minister since has approached Lord Rosebery's eminence on the turf, though the former Irish Taoiseach Charles Haughey has owned some good chasers. Few have even shared his passion for racing. The nearest was Sir Winston Churchill, for whom it was a consolation of old age.

His father Lord Randolph had won the Oaks with L'Abbesse de Jouarre in 1889, when Winston was a schoolboy. That schoolboy didn't register *his colours until he was in* his seventies. But he then proved a lucky owner, notably with Colonist II, who won 13 races, and bred the splendid Vienna, who was third in the St Leger and, more importantly, sired Vaguely Noble, one of the great horses of his time.

Although the Tories were once the party of the "Gentlemen of England", and Labour inherited something of the Liberals' chapel-going distaste for racing and betting, there have been exceptions on both sides. *Harold Macmillan* married into the racing-mad Cavendish family, but never acquired their addiction. Sir Alec Douglas-Home's sport was cricket (as is John Major's) and Sir Edward Heath's was sailing.

On the other side, the Labour MP Reginald Paget was a keen hunting man. And that shadowy personage, Colonel George Wigg, was shifted by Harold Wilson from Paymaster General to chairman of the Horserace Betting Levy Board, *where he made* a different kind of nuisance of himself, as well as doing considerable good for racing, his great passion.

More recently, Lord Wyatt of Weeford, the former left-wing Labour MP — hard as that must sometimes be for him as well as others to believe — has been chairman of the Tote. And that ardent racing man Robin Cook, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, will doubtless be taking time off today from the election.

And this year's Party Politics for party politicians? Mr Cook says he is backing Avro Anson, who may start favourite. Straight Talk sounds like Paddy Ashdown's horse, while Mr Blair might like to back Smith's Band, in honour of his admirable predecessor. For the Prime Minister, I suggest Turning Trix. That is what he has to do in the next three weeks to survive at No 10. If that horse wins this afternoon, it could be a portent.

Do they think we are stupid?

The 'dumbing down' of the election is an insult to us, the voters

Vote, vote, vote for Tony Blair
Chuck old Major out the door —
If it wasn't for the law
I would punch him on the jaw,
And we don't want Major any more.

Simon Jenkins

Elections are dangerous moments for a politician. They turn the gold of high office into the base metal of the hustings. They are the extension of civil war by other means, yet they retain the character of a civil war. The public expects a fight, even if *nothing is at stake*.

The general view of the present election is that nothing is at stake beyond the tenancy of Downing Street. The Thatcherite revolution has triumphed. It conquered the Tory party and has now conquered Labour. As Chesterton said on being shown the Café Royal menu, there is little in the Labour manifesto to which Lady Thatcher could take strong exception. John Major was her heir but Mr Blair has become her clone. The two men must fight over a straw.

Yet must the election be so dumb? I returned from holiday this week, picked up the two party manifestos and groaned. Labour features a ridiculous Mr Blair looking hostile, unsmiling and *exhausted, as if fleeing a Benetton* commercial for a role in *Trainspotting*. What mighty conclave of spin gurus agreed this image? The Tory manifesto, so free in attacking British education, braves a schoolboy howler in its title, misplacing the "only" in "You can only be sure with the Conservatives". *It reads like a condom* advertisement. I prefer to be sure "only with the Conservatives".

When I mentioned this to a party worker, she said: "Oh come on, the manifesto is not meant for you." In other words, who cares about grammar? Manifestos are for plebs, for the Great Unlearned. *And they will not read them*. They are show, marketing, mood music, political wallpaper. Elections are a passing masquerade, while Ye Olde England quietly shuffles the Westminster pack. They are a necessary ritual of power.

I can see her point. Reading this week's manifestos was like watching saliva dribble. Boast follows whinge follows boast follows whinge. They are written to be identical, as Tony Benn once protested, "by Dr Mori and Dr Gallup". "*We will switch spending* from economic failure to investment," says one. "We favour new combinations of available benefits to suit individual circumstances". "A good education is the birthright of every child." "We have zero tolerance of underperformance." A plodding political platitude can be propped up by inspired oratory. Churchill knew the trick. On paper, it merely plonks.

Most of this week's phraseology dies on the brain. "Conservatives embrace evolutionary change." (*I should hope so.*) "We have turned around our economic fortunes." British English teaching may be bad, but not this bad. This is simple waffle. Labour has not stolen the Tories' clothes. Both parties have stolen Paddy Ashdown's, through whose gossamer garments every political breeze passes unnoticed.

Manifestos are games with mirrors, played contemptuous of electors. Their writers and readers — mostly politicians and journalists — claim that they are not for them. Manifestos are to reach out to simpletons in the sticks — people who cannot do joined-up writing, yet supposedly thirst for statistics on comparative GDPs. Elections have joined books, newspapers and broadcasters in the *great drift downmarket, in the* "dumbing down" of Britain. This week's manifestos are on a par with sleaze stories and headless chickens. They are to furnish a day's media distraction — until the awful business is over on May 1.

I go so far with the Central Office cynic, *but no further. First, there must be protein even in the most* vegetarian manifesto. Heaven knows, enough blood is spilt in the writing. Those gripped by the hand of power find it hard to compose 20,000 words and say nothing. Adverbs and adjectives may be subservient but, as Humpty Dumpty said, verbs and nouns have a way of their own. The Tory plans for privatised pensions, tax relief for spouses and the sale of London Underground are innovations forged in the heat of manifesto compromise. They are real changes.

By comparison, there is little in Labour's manifesto but raw ambition. Yet even its emptiness was the outcome of a bitter struggle within the Shadow Cabinet. The fight was to protect an incoming Blair administration from the spendthrift *promises which devastated Mrs* Thatcher's first year. Puncture the Blair helium balloon and it may collapse in a puddle of rubber (amid which glows one gem, an elected mayor for London!). But the *manifesto is eloquent even in what* it does not say. Labour's silence proclaims that 1990s Toryism is safe with Mr Blair and his friends.

That said, I yearn for a thinking person's manifesto, a manifesto for grown-ups, one that debates topics that neither Labour nor the Tories consider suitable for children's viewing. This might include *some* guide to how each party will balance tax rises against spending cuts to reduce public borrowing; how local and central discretion *will be balanced in running* schools; what is the "bottom line" negotiating position at this summer's European summit; where lies the future of farm subsidies and the countryside; what of restricting car use; *how should* we reform Britain's illiberal, dangerous and unsustainable drugs laws; what future for devolution in Northern Ireland. This is all controversial, and therefore suppressed. Politicians wish to keep such controversy from public view, keep it within the club, even if the club is to change its committee — *perhaps especially so*.

On television on Wednesday night, the BBC daringly permitted four "ordinary people" a brief moment on stage. The four were women from Worcester, invited to discuss tax allowances for mothers at home. They did so with a clarity and a scepticism that belied the normal casting of electors as cretins. They were soon cut off. The smile of reason makes bad television. We returned to the studio, to Mr Paxman and Mr Portillo, Mutt and Jeff, Ya and Boo. Yet before the ooze closed back over our heads, we were permitted a sudden sight of blue sky. It was exhilarating.

The media prefers to present lay people as political yobs, like those paraded last week on Channel 4's *Cutting Edge: The Dinner Party*. The subplot of this programme was to show how ghastly voters can be with enough drink inside them, and thus how much better it is to leave politics to pundits. *I assume* the sub-subplot was to show how dangerous elections are, and how sensible Britain is to have fewer than any other country in Europe. Yet I find that when people are invited, and given time, to talk seriously about policy they are more sensible, and certainly more *sincere, than the stage-army of the* partisan. Anyone who has done jury service will agree that encountering a random selection of fellow citizens can be unnerving. They are almost as intelligent as oneself.

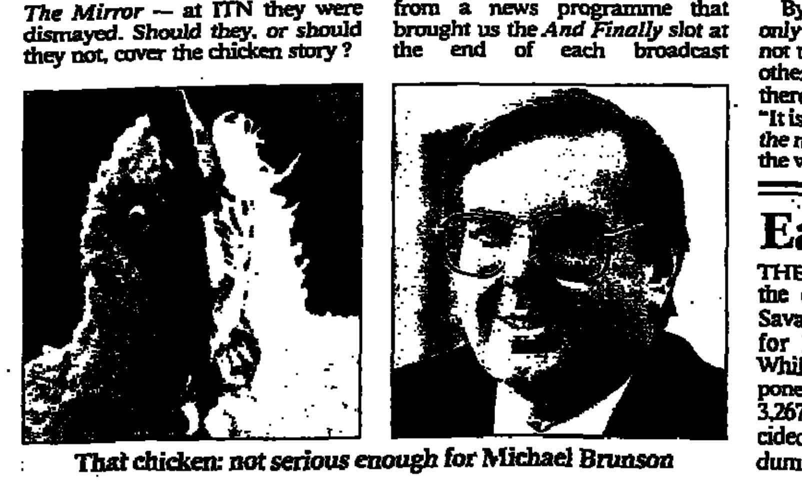
Politics in Britain, as de Tocqueville said, is a club activity. In America it is a civic duty. We read much about British politics becoming more American, but the comparison is usually of leadership campaigns, not of voters. I believe British voters are coming to take elections as seriously as do Americans. This may be one reason why they are more "floating" and more inclined to trouble the pollsters. To treat them as a lumpen proletariat unfit for complex discourse is to patronise and insult them.

The political community may cite Hogarth, Dickens and the Victorian ditty with which I began this piece. But if Gladstone could rouse a half-educated electorate with an erudite two-hour speech, I cannot accept that today's better educated voters must be dismissed with clichés. As politicians go downmarket, they are in danger of passing the electorate on the way up. They may quote Bonar Law's joke: "I am their leader, I must follow them." But the destination need not always be that chosen by the Editors of *The Sun* and the *Daily Mail*.

As the band played, Noël Coward gazed into the eyes of Gertrude Lawrence and said how *strange* it was that "cheap music could be so potent". The assumption of this election campaign is that cheap politics is also potent. I believe this *is mistaken*. Serve up cheap politics, as the parties did this week, and the electorate will react cheaply. It will impede good government and neuter its practitioners. We can surely afford to be more extravagant with the truth.

Fowl play

ALL those chickens on the general election trail have upset the pious souls of the ITN newsroom. While newspapers and the BBC threw *themselves* ecstatically into the tale of the Tory clucker sent to follow Tony Blair around the country — and its headless counterpart from *The Mirror* — at ITN they were dismayed. *Should they, or should* they not, cover the chicken story?



That chicken: not serious enough for Michael Brunson

The reporters on *News at Ten* were divided. Too trivial, said half of them, inlcuding the political editor Michael Brunson. Too much fun to ignore, argued the other half. Coverage of the various rhinos, bears and foxes piling onto the scene caused yet more angst. This from a news programme that brought us the *And Finally* slot at the end of each broadcast dealing with cat-up-tree yarns.

While Coffeemate curdled in their cups, neither side would budge. "The chicken issue became definitive of the whole way the *News at Ten* would be covering the election," said my man by the water cooler. So to prevent a full-blown row, it became necessary to take a vote. The newsroom gathered and the question was put, to cover the chicken or not. The pro-chicken lot won, just.

By way of compromise, however, *only the Tory chicken was shown*, not the headless *Mirror* one or the other wildlife. "It was very nasty in there for a while," says my insider. "It is not going to get any nicer over *the next few weeks. This was about* the whole nature of our reporting."

Easy does it

THERE is a charming lethargy to the election strategy of Peter de Savary, the Referendum candidate for Falmouth and Camborne. While Sebastian Coe, his Tory opponent, limbers up to protect his 3,267 majority, de Savary has decided to take a holiday. A Referendum spokesman believed him to be "resting" at *Skibo, his castle on the* northeast coast of Scotland, a long way from Cornwall.

De Savary's daughter Lisa, who represents her father during his absences, explained: "We have decided not to bore the pants off voters with personal image campaigning. My father will embark on that two weeks before the election."

● *Distinctly ungallant remarks were made by Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers, in front of an embarrassed Gillian Shephard yesterday. "If these manifestos are supposed to represent the passion of Tony Blair and John Major," he said, "I have to say I cannot help feeling sympathy for both Cherie and Norma."*

Water wing

AS though according to a biblical curse, the offices of the hosepipe banners at the Department of the Environment have been flooded. On Wednesday afternoon, staff were ordered home after a burst pipe let gallons of water gush through the top floor of Eland House, Victoria, where John Gummer, the Environment Secretary, has his offices. Gummer, of course, *was the man who during the past* couple of years of water shortages hounded water companies to repair their leaking pipes and asked the public to bathe in bowls.

● *Panic has subsided at the Royal Academy of Arts, in London, where Baroness Thatcher's* Spitting Image *head mysteriously disappeared from a satirists' exhibition over the Easter weekend. It has just been returned anonymously in a package sent from Royal Tunbridge Wells.*

Hosanna

TAFFETA will feature strongly in Cambridge during the election now that Anna Johnstone, an opera singer, has announced she will be standing for the ProLife Alliance Party. Miss Johnstone, 28, a recent convert to Catholicism, *made news* two months ago at her London debut in St James's, Piccadilly, when she exhorted the audience to pray along to her Baroque warblings.

Anna Johnstone: stump arias

Speaking to the *Catholic Herald* this week, she admits that pounding the streets of Cambridge on her election campaign is at times "harrowing", but for her politics is not everything: "If I did no more than sing the *Ave Maria* in different places all over the world," she says, "I'd be happy." After being a parliamentary candidate, her next role will be in *La traviata* in Siberia.

P·H·S

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Blair sounded better in the original English

Gaffes are mistakes. Gaffes are unintended. When Tony Blair told the Scots yesterday that ultimate sovereignty would reside with Westminster after devolution and that, if a parish council could raise tax, so should a Scottish parliament, these were no slips of the tongue. They were a calculated attempt to reassure English voters that a Labour governnment would not create a leviathan north of the border.

Scottish politicians and journalists have been offended by this. But everything said in Scotland is not aimed only at Scots. Scottish aspirations demand and deserve respect; but policies planned for Scotland are not matters for that nation alone. Scotland is part of the United Kingdom: the audience for Mr Blair's words extends around the country, and the repercussions of devolution will be felt well south of Hadrian's Wall.

Some Scots are angry that elements of the agreement reached in their "constitutional convention" about the right form of devolution have been watered down by Labour. They see this as a betrayal because the convention's proposals were reached by cross-party consensus. Yet there was hardly any English involvement in those negotiations. Labour has to fight an election across the whole of Britain, and this issue has expanded from a Scottish to a British one. English anxieties too have a right to be heard and to be assuaged.

Mr Blair, as it now is clear, did not provocatively compare a Scottish parliament with a parish council: he asked why, if even a parish council was allowed to raise revenue, it should be shocking that a Scottish parliament could do so too? Such words are hardly hostile in sentiment to devolution. This is only an insult if wilfully interpreted as such.

The real trouble lies not in Scotland as a whole but in the Scottish Labour Party which has for some time been the last bastion of old Labour. It reluctantly voted to replace Clause Four. Its members suspect, rightly, that Mr Blair does not sign up to their purist ambitions for devolution. Now that supporters of the Labour leader have at last managed to win control of the party executive, the "newing" of Scottish Labour is under way, to the fury of the "old". If the executive can control the selection of candidates for the Scottish parliament, then they too are likely to be Blairites.

The Labour leader said yesterday that, even if Scots vote for their parliament to have tax-raising powers, Labour members will undertake not to use them between now and the next general election. This too is anathema to old Labour Scots. They see it as an emasculation of their ambitions and are already trying to portray it as a Westminster veto on Scottish deliberations.

What they most dread is that the powers of the new parliament are going to be weaker than those agreed at the constitutional convention. Each time that Mr Blair says something designed to reassure English voters, they interpret it as backsliding. They may well be right.

Mr Blair, they scoff, simply wants a parliament north of the border that will not cause trouble for him as Prime Minister. He would be sensible to do so, in the interests of the nation as well as of himself. For while a small amount of tension between Westminster and Edinburgh may be unavoidable, even creative, a large amount could indeed lead to the nightmare of which the Conservatives warn. The Scottish Nationalists could exploit discontent as a wedge to achieve full independence.

Scottish devolutionists are understandably disappointed that they may not achieve all that they want, and that they have long awaited from a Labour government. But whatever devolution they get will be a better outcome for them than the status quo.

THE TALEBAN TACTIC

Dark Ages at home: drug smuggling abroad

Afghanistan is fast disappearing into the primitive obscurity of the 7th century. Each week Radio Shariat, the voice of the bearded Islamic zealots who now rule Kabul, announces arbitrary new decrees. Petty, quixotic and almost comical in their far-fetched interpretation of religious purity, they are, nevertheless, the building blocks of a dictatorship now suffocating the nation.

Photography, television, video players and music are banned because they are contrary to Islam. Kite-flying is a frivolous distraction and prohibited. Football offends religion because it allows men to show their legs. But the most pernicious decrees are those dealing with the status of women. Thrown out of work, banned from public appearance unless veiled from head to foot, deprived of legal rights, they are obliged to remain secluded at home, the chattels of their menfolk. Kabul's schools have begun a new term without any girls. Women must not wear white socks lest they are attractive to men. House owners must paint over ground-floor windows in case passers-by see a woman inside. Indeed, the Taleban's attitude was summed up by an official in the Attorney General's office: "The face of a woman is a source of corruption for men." Here is a culture suffering not only extreme zealotry but institutionalised misogyny.

Poverty and despair are the breeding grounds of fanaticism. Few countries have suffered more or seen their culture so comprehensively destroyed by alien troops and ideologies than Afghanistan. Its mountains are strewn with millions of mines; its agriculture is ruined; it has been abandoned by the West, forgotten by the strategists and left to its own murderous post-communist civil wars. Ancient tribal and ethnic rivalries have set clan against clan. For years rockets rained down on the besieged capital as warlords battled for control. The men of the Taleban were successful, not least because they promised peace, stability, unity and an iron discipline.

Like the Khmer Rouge, the Afghan victors are now putting into practice the extremism that fuelled their fighting spirit. This poses a dilemma for the remaining Western agencies. Should the Red Cross and United Nations relief agencies threaten to leave altogether if women's conditions are not improved, or should they remain and attempt to mitigate the new misery?

A less principled dilemma faces policymakers in the West. In the new Great Game, Afghanistan is seen as a way of weakening Iran, whose Shia hierarchy is horrified at being outdone in Islamic zeal by its Sunni neighbours. Western policymakers are quietly backing attempts by Pakistan, long-time backers of the Taleban, to open Afghanistan to trade and transit. Saudi and American interests want to build a gas pipeline from Central Asia. Simply by not condemning their human rights record more forcefully, the United States is giving the new rulers of Kabul free rein.

The calculation is that once law and order are established, the zealots will, under the experience of government, discover pragmatism. There is little to support this hope. More compelling is the evidence that the Taleban are harbouring foreign Islamic revolutionaries and financing their state through a huge new heroin trade. The Taleban tactic is not only to impose an obscurantist regime on its own people: it is also to export even larger quantities of drugs to the world outside.

WASHINGTON WEDDING

Rates and ratings for the power couple from DC

An American who might legitimately be described as the most powerful man in the world will be married tomorrow. This does not mean that bigamy can join the long list of charges hurled at Bill Clinton by his many opponents. The man about to tie the knot is Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and prime influence upon the level of US interest rates.

The President of the United States certainly looks an impressive figure. He has a big house, a fine plane and a phalanx of secret service agents. Mr Clinton, however, is constrained by Congress, interest groups, public opinion, foreign governments and the Federal Reserve Board. His room for completely independent action is much more modest than it looks. Lyndon Johnson once complained that "the only power I have is nuclear and no one will let me use that".

By contrast, Mr Greenspan has few such limitations. Since his appointment in 1987 he has dominated the world economy. His views determine interest rates, stock market levels, and currency values. Those decisions soon feed through to wallets here in Britain. Every word uttered by Mr Greenspan is analysed thoroughly by the financial community. Normally his vocabulary is deliberately delphic. Many a congressional committee has been completely perplexed by his testimony. When, last December, he described the rise in share values as "irrational exuberance", stock markets around the world briefly crashed.

Now it seems that Mr Greenspan has been experiencing some exuberance of his own. A man of enormous care and caution, he has spent 12 years in the constant company of Andrea Mitchell, one of the best rated television news reporters in the United States. In that time they have established themselves as the premier power couple in Washington. Unexpectedly, he popped the question last Christmas. Even on this occasion his language was so opaque, it is said, that it took three attempts before Ms Mitchell realised he was proposing.

Washington will now have its wedding of the year and is awash with excitement. This is a place of liberal politics and conservative attitudes. While the social scene has coped with its most prominent cohabiting couple, there will be great relief that this 71-year-old man and 50-year-old woman have finally become conventional. Crude New Yorkers will, of course, analyse the ceremony and honeymoon for clues towards interest rate policy. Washingtonians are simply relieved that dinner party etiquette will be more straightforward in future.

Unfortunately, the happy couple are unlikely to be awash with expensive presents. A law passed last year means that a public official may not accept gifts exceeding $20 in value from anyone with whom he might have professional dealings. In Mr Greenspan's case this means the population of the planet. That sounds like a lot of kettles and toasters.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Italian case for a force in Albania

From the Chairman of the Italian Senate Foreign Affairs Committee and others

Sir, We cannot accept your suggestion in a leading article today that Italians should "rethink" the Albanian expedition currently being prepared in Rome. The consensus in Italy, as confirmed by a vote in Italy's Lower House yesterday, is that our country cannot just stand by and watch Albania self-destruct.

Our motives for supporting and promoting an international force whose task, as sanctioned by the United Nations Security Council, will be to protect and supervise the distribution of humanitarian aid in Albania, are not, as you say, mere national self-interest — for all that such a motive is in itself perfectly legitimate — but rather the conviction that in the current era of global security the citizens of Albania have every right to expect the international community, and Europe in particular, to shoulder some responsibility for their security and wellbeing.

The sooner this happens, the better for all, as testified by the pressing requests being made by all sides in Albania, even by community leaders in Valona, the port town currently in the hands of armed rebels, from which the ill-fated victims of last week's collision had sailed (report, March 31). It is not in either Italy's or our European partners' interest to allow Albania to become a festering sore in Europe's southern flank, exporting crime and misery across the continent.

Italy, we believe, deserves gratitude both for having taken in, quite alone, over 13,000 refugees and for volunteering to lead a practically difficult mission. In all international humanitarian or peacekeeping missions carried out so far — by common consent, including Somalia — Italy's armed forces have distinguished themselves for their ability in undertaking international police tasks.

Readers of *The Times* should rest assured that neither Italy's Parliament nor, indeed, our international partners in this mission, will consent to an expedition being dispatched without both a clear mandate and a firm agreement on chain of command and division of duties.

Yours sincerely,
GIAN GIACOMO MIGONE,
Chairman,
Senate Foreign Affairs Committee,
STEFANO BOCO
(Verdi Ulivo).
JAS GAWRONSKI
(Forza Italia).
SAVERIO SALVATORE PORCARI
(Allianza Nazionale).
SAVERIO VERTONE
(Forza Italia).
TANA de ZULUETA
(Sinistra Democratica Ulivo).
Palazzo Madama, 00186 Rome.
April 3.

Upholding standards in public life

From Mr Mohamed Al Fayed

Sir, Sir Edward du Cann (letter, April 3) says John Major "deserves credit" for the Nolan committee reforms and the Downey inquiry. There would never have been a Nolan committee but for the disclosures I made, first to the Prime Minister on September 29, 1994, and to the press on October 20.

I did this in the public interest, notwithstanding the considerable personal and commercial risks involved. Sir Gordon Downey would never have investigated "cash for questions" if I had not forced the issue in front of the Commons Privileges Committee, despite the efforts of some of the members to restrict my testimony when I appeared before it on November 1, 1995.

Sir Edward says I "wasted parliamentary time and taxpayers' money by making a monstrous allegation against the Home Secretary". Sir Gordon Downey did not see it like that and found no fault with me (report, March 7, later editions). Rather, he said: "I have no reason to think that Mr Al Fayed is not telling the truth as he sees it." He stated: "Mr Al Fayed has discovered fragments of evidence which, when pieced together, seem to support the explanation of a bribe . . ."

Even though he did not uphold my complaint, Sir Gordon made no criticism which could justify Sir Edward's charge that my complaint was vexatious. His demand that I face "justice" is rich indeed from a man who, as chairman of Lonrho, led a lengthy parliamentary campaign against me.

Yours faithfully,
M. AL FAYED,
Chairman,
Harrods Ltd, Knightsbridge, SW1.
April 3.

From Mr Stephen Axbey

Sir, I resent the Conservatives saying that they wish to move away from sleaze in order to concentrate on the "real" election issues.

In my view sleaze *is* a real issue. It is the belief that standards in public life aren't very important to ordinary people that has helped lead so many Tories into trouble in the first place.

Yours etc,
STEPHEN AXBEY,
40 Heathfield North,
Twickenham, Middlesex.
April 3.

From Mr Peter Roxburgh

Sir, I see in today's edition that the Conservative Party is paying somebody to follow Tony Blair dressed as a chicken. Perhaps Mr Blair should respond in kind and pay someone to follow John Major dressed as a large brown envelope?

Yours faithfully,
P. ROXBURGH,
9 Festing Road, Putney, SW15.
April 3.

Freemasons' role in law and charity

From Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell Syms

Sir, Perhaps the most disquieting element of Masonic influence in the civil courts ("On the square, but are they on the level?", Law, April 1) is that many Masons will deny membership. Without a statutory and supervised register of the interests and membership of the judiciary, the legal professions and court officials, how can listing clerks avoid the risk of perverting the course of justice?

In his letter of March 28 Mr M. B. S. Higham, the Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England, refers to Freemasons' exemption from the Unlawful Societies Act 1799 (obtained by lobbying the then Prime Minister). In fact, this Act, which was repealed in 1967, imposed restrictions on Masons, including registering all members of each lodge with the clerk of the peace.

Is that so different from the Home Affairs Select Committee's latest recommendations (report, March 26) which now have the Masons all of a tizzy?

Yours faithfully,
E. N. GASKELL SYMS,
86 Victoria Road,
Barnet, Hertfordshire.
April 1.

From Mr J. E. Bloomfield

Sir, As a Mason, a Rotarian and former member of the Round Table (you have to retire at 40), I know that all three of these organisations have common aims of fellowship (or brotherhood), goodwill to all men and charity.

It is obligatory for Round Tablers and Rotarians to wear lapel badges. Such badges are available for Masons but it is not obligatory to wear them.

Masons contribute significantly to local charities, many of them non-Masonic. Virtually every hospice in the land receives annually large measures of Masonic monetary support. Masons go quietly about their support for worthy causes and do not advertise.

There is, locally, a boat which offers free trips for disabled people. Emblazoned on it are Rotary, Round Table and Lions logos. It is also supported by a local lodge, but this is only shown in the boat-owner's accounts.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN BLOOMFIELD,
(Past Master, Lodge of Concord,
Southampton),
Reynolds Cottage,
Mill Lane, Brockenhurst, Hampshire.
April 2.

How loyal readers earn their prizes

From the Editor of
New Innkeeper Magazine

Sir, The topic of reader competitions (Mr J. F. K. Hinde's letter, April 2) causes some hilarity, as well as serious concern, among journalists in the trade press where, if the competition is too simple, reader response can be in inverse proportion to the value of the prize.

A fellow editor confesses having had no entries whatsoever for a competition offering an all-expenses-paid VIP week for two in Chicago. The questions for this competition, like that noted by Mr Hinde, contained all the answers. On another market-leading magazine which I once edited (circulation 36,000), we could receive seven or eight entries for simple competitions with very attractive prizes such as VIP weekends in European capitals. However, at the same time we attracted a truly outstanding 600 responses to a competition for which the top prize was a Guinness T-shirt.

Not surprisingly, our conclusion is that if the competition is simple, make the prize "winnable" — ie, modest. And if the prize is valuable make readers work for it. This magazine has just sent a group of eight readers on an all-paid week in New Orleans as a prize to a competition; but entrants had to submit to a six-months-long postal "Business Game", with the aim of helping publicans develop new business skills. Just under 1,000 people joined in (6 per cent of circulation).

The moral is: enter newspaper competitions — the odds are better than the lottery.

Yours faithfully,
ANDREW PALMER, Editor,
New Innkeeper Magazine,
The British Institute of Innkeeping,
Wessex House,
80 Park Street, Camberley, Surrey.
April 3.

Seek and fail to find

From Mr Richard Exworthy

Sir, Mr John Murphy (letter, April 2) bemoans the poor state of leadership and standard set by those in positions of trust and authority and asks from what source he should seek better examples.

I suggest that he looks at my two children, aged three and six. They seem less confused than their parents; understand each other better than their teachers; enjoy better health than their doctors; are incapable of real sin; possess more self-confidence than any psychiatrist; and have clearer thought than a guru.

Only with politicians do they compare. Children are self-serving, devious and never to be trusted. Thankfully they are such hopeless liars that we always know whether to believe them. It appears, however, that with politicians we sometimes have to wait until after we have voted for them before we learn the truth.

Yours faithfully,
R. EXWORTHY,
24 Agar House,
Denmark Road, Kingston, Surrey.
April 2.

From Mr Michael Allen

Sir, I am fortunately of the generation that has the answer to John Murphy's question.

It is — "within yourself".

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL ALLEN,
44 Campden Hill Court,
Campden Hill Road, W8.
April 2.

From Mr S. J. Traynar

Sir, Mr Murphy despairs at the lack of a good role model for his life.

Try Jesus!

Yours faithfully,
S. J. TRAYNAR,
74 Conrad Road, Witham, Essex.
April 2.

Catholic doctrines

From Mr Richard Bedingfeld

Sir, For those of us who sincerely believe in the Catholic faith, it is disturbing to read an article which takes the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church to task as caustically as Tom Murphy does ("A Priest accused of heresy", Body and Mind, April 1).

The Sri Lankan priest, Father Tissa Balasuriya, has openly denounced doctrines which are regarded by the Catholic Church as being part of divinely revealed truth, and the Church therefore has a duty to the faithful around the world to establish that these opinions do not represent authentic Catholic teaching.

Undeniably, it is sad that Father Balasuriya should endure excommunication at 72, but how much more of a loss would it be if communities in Sri Lanka and elsewhere were misinformed about the truth as a result of the publication of his book, *On Mary and Human Liberation*.

Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, holds a thankless position in the Vatican. I find it reassuring that he has the courage to fulfil his role by condemning error where it appears.

Yours faithfully,
RICHARD BEDINGFELD,
Oxburgh Hall, King's Lynn, Norfolk.
April 1.

Farmers and hunting

From Mr James Crosbie Dawson

Sir, Mr G. W. Baron (letter, March 28) is surely naive to suggest that one of the reasons why farmers plant and preserve hedgerows, copses, etc, is their "natural respect for a varied and attractive countryside". A few may do this. Most do so because of the sporting benefits that such habitats produce.

Speaking personally, I could easily run my farm without any hedges and would probably farm better as a result. The reduction in the herbivore population would undoubtedly benefit the crops.

Anyone who doubts the feasibility of farming without trees should take a trip through the grain-growing areas of northern France, where every square metre is cropped. The crops look magnificent and yield accordingly.

Any attempt to restrict field sports by legislation will undoubtedly have an adverse effect on the countryside as we know it, and in many cases could only ever be partially effective. Hunting, shooting, etc, will always go hand in hand with conservation.

Yours faithfully,
J. CROSBIE DAWSON,
Northington Farm,
Overton, Hampshire.
April 3.

'Completing' Elgar

From Mr Raymond Monk

Sir, Mr Paul Grafton's letter (March 29), which sought to justify the Elgar family's support for the "completion" by Anthony Payne of Elgar's Third Symphony, was in my view unfair to the memory of the composer's daughter, Carice Elgar Blake. Carice, who was my friend, was not, as Mr Grafton suggests, in any way responsible for the present highly unsatisfactory situation. The agreement she signed in July 1934 with Sir John Reith (acting on behalf of the BBC) was specifically designed to prevent any such "tinkering" with the sketches. The relevant clause being:

> The Corporation for itself its successors and assigns hereby undertakes and agrees that none of the said manuscripts shall ever be published either in whole or in part and that they will not permit any person whatever to have access to the said manuscripts for the purpose of finishing or completing or making any alteration.

Perhaps, therefore, it is the BBC which should be called to account in this matter and not my late friend, who did everything possible to meet her father's dying wish.

Yours faithfully,
RAYMOND MONK (Senior Trustee,
The Elgar Foundation, Leicester),
19 Severn Street, Leicester.
March 31.

Small is beautiful

From Mr Alan Millard

Sir, Thank you for featuring Rutland (report and photographs, March 31) with its delightful motto *Multum in parvo* — a lot in a little. As I am only five feet four inches tall, with a tendency towards rotundity, I have decided to adopt the motto for myself.

Yours sincerely,
ALAN MILLARD,
8 Medina Court,
Marine Parade West,
Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire.
April 1.

Cavalry charges

From Major L. E. N. Neville-Jones

Sir, Like Mr Bridgewater and General Friedberger (letters, March 31) I was surprised to read (report, March 26) that the charge at Omdurman in 1898 "is generally considered to be the last (British Army) cavalry charge". A lot of old Yeomen must turn in their graves every time they hear this suggestion.

For instance, the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry, on February 28, 1916, in the Western Desert, found themselves alone on the battlefield faced by the rearguard of a force of Senussi who had invaded Egypt and were under Turkish officers.

The regiment, which could only muster 196 men including the cooks and the farriers respectively with their cleavers and branding irons, charged over three quarters of a mile of firm sand and completely routed the enemy, who numbered more than 500 men with rifles and three machine guns.

Colonel Souter and Lieutenant Blaksley, both of whose horses had been shot from under them, captured their Commander, Jaafa Pasha. Major-General Peyton, who commanded the British force, later said: "I believe that I am right in saying that they (QODY) were the first Cavalry Regiment to show that it was possible for determined horsemen to ride through machine guns in action."

The regiment did just that on four more occasions in Palestine, the last being at Er Remte on September 27, 1918. Four days later the Australian Light Horse Regiment carried out a mounted charge near Duma; and the Mysore Lancers, together with the Jodhpore Lancers, did the same on October 26, near Aleppo.

Sadly the Queen's Own Dorset Yeomanry were stood down in 1967, but I am glad to say that yesterday, April 1, 1997, a new armour replacement regiment was formed at Bovington — The Dorset Yeomanry.

Yours sincerely,
EDWARD NEVILLE-JONES,
(General Organiser and Honorary
Archivist, Queen's Own Dorset
Yeomanry & Dorset Garrison
Old Comrades Association),
Audlem House,
68 Blake Hill Crescent,
Lilliput, Poole, Dorset.
April 2.

From Mrs Joan Whateley

Sir, I was particularly interested in Mr Bridgewater's letter. My grandfather, Major W. H. King, of the 21st Lancers, took part in the Omdurman charge of 1898 and my father, Lieutenant F. H. King, of the Warwickshire Yeomanry, took part in the charge of 1917 against the Turkish guns at Huj, near Gaza.

Yours faithfully,
JOAN WHATELEY (*née* King),
Rosemary,
Walker's Green, Marden, Hereford.
April 1.

Weekend Money letters, page 37

Letters for publication should carry contact telephone numbers. We regret that we cannot accept letters by telephone but they may be sent by fax to 0171-782 5046.

Bit of a mix-up

From Mrs Rae Michaelis

Sir, Atheists and physicists perhaps share the same confusion (letters, March 19, 25, 27). Niels Bohr, the Danish nuclear physicist and Nobel prizewinner, often shared his favourite story as follows:

A physicist hung a horseshoe on the door of his laboratory. His surprised colleagues asked whether he thought it would bring him luck in his experiments. "No, I don't believe in superstitions," he said, "but I have been told that it works even if you don't believe in it."

Yours faithfully,
RAE MICHAELIS,
Lynfield,
2d Lynwood Grove, Orpington, Kent.
April 1.

COURT CIRCULAR

WINDSOR CASTLE

April 4: The Duke of Edinburgh, Trustee, this morning attended a Meeting of the Council, followed by lunch, at St George's House, Windsor Castle.

ST JAMES'S PALACE

April 4: The Prince of Wales this morning visited The Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood, Middlesex.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE

April 4:

The Princess Royal, accompanied by Captain Timothy Laurence, RN, today attended the International Festival of Youth Rugby Finals at Murrayfield and was received by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh (Mr Eric Milligan, the Right Hon the Lord Provost).

Latest wills

Sir Evelyn **Delves Broughton**, of Nantwich, Cheshire, left estate valued at £3,962,702 net. He left his estate mostly to relatives.

The Countess of Perth, of Stobhall, by Perth, Scotland, left estate valued at £303,189 net.

Baroness Birk, of London W1, left estate valued at £709,477 net.
She left £20,000 to the London School of Economics and Political Science and to the Jerusalem Foundation; £10,000 to the Friends of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; £5,000 each to Institute of Public Policy Research, Writers and Scholars Education Trust, Ellis Birk Youth Trust, Alzheimer's Disease Society, Jewish Care and the Terence Higgins Trust; £2,500 to the New Shakespeare Company; £2,000 each to Shelter, the New London Synagogue Trust and The Labour Party; £1,500 to the British Film Institute and to the Samaritans; £1,000 to eight charities and £500 to London Marriage Guidance.

Professor Sir Geoffrey **Wilkinson**, of London SW1, left estate valued at £455,556 net.

Jean Katharine **Heywood-Lonsdale**, of Market Drayton, Shropshire, left estate valued at £6,047,029 net.
She left £500 to the Donkey Sanctuary, Sidmouth, Devon.

Michael John **Taylor**, of Northampton, left estate valued at £1,941,669.

Alan James **Peech**, of Blyth, Worksop, Nottinghamshire, left estate valued at £1,150,034 net.
He left £15,000 to charities.

Luncheon

Lord Mayor of Westminster

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Westminster were the hosts at a luncheon held yesterday at City Hall. Among those present were:

The Ambassador of Bolivia, the Ambassador of Austria, the Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire, Lady Fretwell, the Mayor of Wandsworth, Mr Alderman Gavin Arthur, Mr Daniel Battsek, Councillor David Harvey, Mr Robert Maxted and Mr and Mrs William Wilder.

Awards

The Royal Aero Club

The Royal Aero Club annual awards ceremony will be held at Goldsmiths' Hall, on April 15. For tickets please write to Kimberley House, Vaughan Way, Leicester, LE1 4SG or telephone 0116-253 1051.

Reception

National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies

HRH The Duchess of Gloucester, Patron of NADFAS, attended a reception at Hampton Court Palace to mark the Silver Jubilee of Young NADFAS on Thursday, April 3, 1997.

Service dinner

9th Battalion Parachute Regiment

Major W.R. Mills presided at the annual dinner of the 9th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment Officers' Dining Club held last night at the Army and Navy Club.

Royal engagements

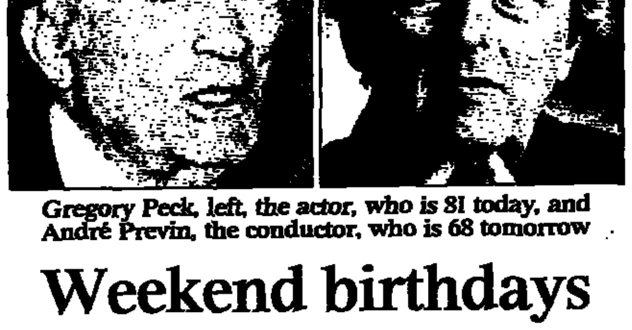
TODAY:
The Duke of York will attend ceremonies at RAF Cranwell at 12.30pm to mark the amalgamation of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

The Princess Royal will attend the 150th anniversary of the Grand National at Aintree at noon.

TOMORROW:
Princess Margaret will attend a service of thanksgiving for the success of the abbey appeal at Tewkesbury Abbey at 2.50pm and will open the new visitor centre.

Legal appointment

His Honour Judge Petre has retired from the South Eastern Circuit.



Gregory Peck, left, the actor, who is 81 today, and André Previn, the conductor, who is 68 tomorrow

Weekend birthdays

Lord Frederick Windsor is 18 years old tomorrow.

TODAY: Professor John Albery, FRS, Master, University College, Oxford, 61; Miss Jane Asher, actress, 51; Mr Michael Bryant, actor, 69; Mr James Buckley, chief executive, Baltic Exchange, 53; Mr Andrew Buxton, chairman, Barclays Bank, 58; Baroness Delacourt-Smith of Alteryn, 81; Mr Tom Finney, former footballer, 75; Dr John Gilbert, MP, 70; Mr Arthur Hailey, author, 77; Mr Nigel Hawthorne, actor, 68; Sir Douglas Henley, former Auditor-General, 78.

Professor Denis Lawton, former Director, London University Institute of Education, 66; Admiral Sir Michael Livesay, former Admiral President, RN College Greenwich, 61; Professor Donald Lynden-Bell, astronomer, 62; Mr Robert E. McKee, former chairman and managing director, Conoco (UK), 51; Mr Stuart May, senior partner, Theodore Goddard, 60; Professor Peter Moore, former Principal, London Business School, 69; Mr Stanley Orme, MP, 74; Mr Gregory Peck, actor, 81; Miss Jennifer Penney, ballerina, 51; General Colin Powell, KCB, former Chairman, American Joint Chiefs of Staff, 60; Lord Rockley, 53.

TOMORROW: Mr Franta Belsky, sculptor, 76; Sir Paul Beresford, MP, 51; Miss Joan Bernard, former Principal, Trevelyan College, Durham, 79; Mr Rodney Bickerstaffe, trade unionist, 52; Mr Rory Bremner, impressionist, 36; Mrs Anne Campbell, MP, 57; Miss Joan Carlyle, soprano, 66; Mr Bernard Carter, painter and etcher, 77; Mr Harry Conroy, former trade unionist, 54; Mr Roger Cook, investigative journalist and broadcaster, 54; Mr Paul Daniels, magician, 59; Admiral Sir Desmond Dreyer, 87; Mr Julian Faber, former chairman, Willis Faber, 80; Mr Willis Hall, writer, 68; Professor David Ingram, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Kent at Canterbury, 70; Mr Justice Knox, 72; the Duke of Montrose, 62; Lord Moore of Wolvercote, 76; the Rev Ian Paisley, MP, MEP, 71; Miss Felicity Palmer, mezzo-soprano, 53; Mr André Previn, KBE, conductor, 68; Sir Marcus Worsley, Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, 72.

Anniversaries

TODAY
BIRTHS:
Thomas Hobbes, philosopher, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, 1588; Jean Honoré Fragonard, painter, Grasse, France, 1732; Sir Henry Havelock, general, relieved Lucknow during the Indian Mutiny, Sunderland, 1795.

Joseph Lister, Baron Lister, surgeon and founder of antiseptic medicine, Upton, Essex, 1827; Algernon Swinburne, poet and critic, London, 1837; Spencer Tracy, actor, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1900; Herbert von Karajan, conductor, Salzburg, 1908.

DEATHS:
William Brouncker, 2nd Viscount Brouncker, mathematician, first President of the Royal Society 1662-77, London, 1684.

Georges-Jacques Danton, French Revolution leader, executed, Paris, 1794; Robert Raikes, pioneer of Sunday schools, Gloucester, 1811; George Edward Herbert, 5th Earl of Carnarvon, archaeologist, Cairo, 1923; Douglas MacArthur, American army general, Washington, 1964; Chiang Kai-shek, head of the National Government in China 1928-49, Taiwan, 1975.

Howard Hughes, manufacturer, aviator and film producer, on flight to Houston, Texas, 1976; Sir Arthur Harris, Marshal of the RAF, Goring, Oxfordshire, 1984.

Johann Strauss's opera *Die Fledermaus* was first performed in Vienna, 1874.

The trial of Oscar Wilde began at the Old Bailey for offences arising from his friendship with Lord Alfred Douglas, 1895.

Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister, 1955.

The British task force sailed from Southampton for the Falkland Islands after the invasion by Argentina, 1982.

TOMORROW
BIRTHS:
Jean Baptiste Rousseau, poet, Paris, 1671; James Mill, utilitarian philosopher, Logieport, near Montrose, 1773; Alexander Herzen, writer and socialist, Moscow, 1812; Harry Houdini, escapologist, Appleton, Wisconsin, 1874.

Anthony Herman Fokker, aviator, aircraft designer and manufacturer, Kederi, Java, 1890.

DEATHS:
King Richard I, reigned 1189-99, Chalun, France, 1199; Raphael, painter, Rome, 1520; Albrecht Dürer, painter and engraver, Nuremberg, 1528; Sir Francis Walsingham, statesman, London, 1590.

John Stow, antiquary, London, 1605; Sir Seymour Hicks, Fleet, Hampshire, 1949; Jules Bordet, bacteriologist, Nobel laureate 1919, Brussels, 1961; Igor Stravinsky, composer, New York, 1971.

An earthquake tremor damaged St Paul's Cathedral and other London churches, 1580.

The Mormon Church was founded by Joseph Smith at Fayette, New York, 1830.

Robert Peary arrived at the North Pole, 1909.

The United States declared war on Germany, 1917.

Church news

Appointments

The Rev David Richards, Priest-in-charge, Stratford, St John, Christ Church and Forest Gate, St James: to be Vicar, Stratford, St John, Christ Church and Forest Gate, St James (Chelmsford).
The Rev Theo Samuel, Vicar, St Martin, West Drayton: now also a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral (London).
The Rev Harry Smart, Assistant Curate, Thirsk Team Ministry (York): to be Assistant Curate, St Leonard's, Norwood, Sheffield (Sheffield).
Canon Christopher Smith, Residentiary Canon of Sheffield Cathedral: to be also Bishop's Adviser on the Paranormal (Sheffield).
The Rev Craig Smith, Assistant Curate, Bramley and Ravenfield w Hooton Roberts and Braithwell (Sheffield): to be Assistant Curate, Rainham (Chelmsford).
The Rev John Troop, Priest-in-charge, St Columba's, Southwick: to be Vicar of that benefice (Durham).
The Rev David Wade, Priest-in-charge, Victoria Docks, St Luke: to be Vicar, Victoria Docks, St Luke (Chelmsford).

Resignations and retirements

Canon Eric Buchanan, Vicar, Higham Ferrers w Chelveston (Peterborough): to retire April 20.
The Rev Patrick Campbell, Vicar, Wybunbury and Doddington (Chester): retired January 31.
The Rev Andrew Coleby, Team Vicar, Gleadless, Sheffield (Sheffield): to resign July 31.
The Rev Derek Hodgson, Vicar, St Michael's, Mytholmroyd (Wakefield): to retire May 31.
The Rev Oystein Holth, Priest-in-charge, St Barnabas, Pimlico (London): retired February 28.
The Rev David Johnson, Vicar, Coxwold and Husthwaite (York): to retire November 30.
The Rev Barry Oakley, Vicar, All Saints, Edmonton (London): to retire October 1.

Forthcoming marriages

Dr J.A. Allkins and Dr S.M. Hyde
The engagement is announced between James, elder son of Mr and Mrs Michael Allkins, of Woking, Surrey, and Susan, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs Christopher Hyde, of Bowdon, Cheshire.

Mr T.C. Barker and Miss C.P.E. Strawson
The engagement is announced between Tim, son of Mr and Mrs Peter W. Barker, of East Yorkshire, and Carolin, younger daughter of Major General and Mrs John Strawson.

Mr P. Forsythe and Miss E. O'Connell
The engagement is announced between Paul, son of the late Mr John Forsythe and of Mrs Forsythe, of Liverpool, and Emily, daughter of Colonel and Mrs John O'Connell, of Vines Cross, East Sussex.

The Rev J.G.L. Gould and Miss E.A. Waghorn
The engagement is announced between Jonathan, son of Mr and Mrs John Gould, of Wirswall Hall, Shropshire, and Elisabeth (Beth), daughter of Mr and Mrs Peter Waghorn, of Maypole, Monmouth.

Mr M.V. Hartz and Miss D.S.M. Kingston
The engagement is announced between Michael, elder son of Gillian and the late Torben Hartz, formerly of Oxshott, Surrey, and Deirdre, only daughter of the late Rose and Robert Kingston, of Alton, Hampshire.

Mr J. Hillyard-Miller and Miss S. Warren-Knott
The engagement is announced between James, younger son of Colonel and Mrs Geoffrey Hillyard-Miller, of Greenwich, London, and Sophia, only daughter of Mr and Mrs Donald Warren-Knott, of Sherborne, Dorset.

Mr M. Hounsell and Miss H. Griffith
The engagement is announced between Michael, only son of Mr Graham Hounsell, of London, and of Mrs Gordon Storey, of Long Sutton, Somerset, and Harriet, elder daughter of the late Mr Patrick Griffith and of Mrs Griffith, of Holmwood, Surrey.

Mr S.L. Hoyle and Miss F.M. McVeigh
The engagement is announced between Stephen, only son of the late Mr and Mrs Lewis Hoyle, of Weston-super-Mare, and Fiona, only daughter of the late Mr John McVeigh and of Mrs Mary Angela McVeigh, of Widnes.

Mr T.J. McVittie and Miss H.M. Tyson
The engagement is announced between Timothy, son of Mr David McVittie, of Wallingford, and of Mrs Joanna McVittie, of Reading, and Helen, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs John Tyson, of Canterbury.

Mr E. Rigatti Luchini and Miss N.E. Barber
The engagement is announced between Edgardo, only son of Mr and Mrs Silio Rigatti Luchini, of Padova, Italy, and Natasha Emma, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs Barry Barber, of Cambridge.

Mr A.J.A. Stewart and Miss P.R. Swinson
The engagement is announced between Alexander, only son of Mrs Sally Stewart, of Knightsbridge, London, and the late Mr Kenneth Stewart, and Rebecca, third daughter of Mr and Mrs Tony Swinson, of Cranbrook, Kent.

Mr I.G. Warwick and Miss S.M. Harper
The engagement is announced between Ian, son of Mrs Millicent Fyles, and the late Mr George Fyles, of Orrel, Lancashire, and Susan, daughter of Mr and Mrs Christopher Harper, of High Moor, Lancashire.

Mr R.J. Whately and Miss K. Ara
The engagement is announced between Rollo, elder son of Mr David Whately and of the late Mrs David Whately, of Rye, East Sussex, and Katherine, elder daughter of Mr and Mrs José Antonio Ara Burugorri, of Jersey.

Church services tomorrow

First Sunday after Easter

ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL, ABERDEEN: 8 HC; 10.15 S Euch, Quiet Hour (Oldroyd), Lord for the tender mercies sake (Hilton).

ARMAGH CATHEDRAL: 10 HC; 11 Choral Euch, Missa Sante Albano (Willan), O taste and see (Vaughan Williams), Canon J Barton; 3.15 Choral E, Responses (Morley), Stanford in B flat, White).

BELFAST CATHEDRAL: 10 HC; 11 S Euch, God be in my head (Rutter), Jackson in G, Ubi caritas (Duruflé); 3.30 Choral E, Sumsion in G, Expectans expectavi (Wood).

BIRMINGHAM CATHEDRAL: 9 MP; 9.15 HC; 11 Choral Euch, Missa Aurora Lucis (Gloria), Missa Arcana (Jefficoat), Since by man came death (Handel), The Provost; 4 Choral E, Responses (Stormont), Howells in G, My beloved spake (Hadley).

BRECON CATHEDRAL: 8 Holy Euch; 11 M, Te Deum (Boyce in C), This joyful Eastertide (Dutch Carol), Canon Hughes; 3.30 E, Hylton Stewart in C, Ye choirs of new Jerusalem (Stanford).

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 9.30 M; 11 S Euch, Missa Sancti Nicolai (Haydn), These are they that follow the lamb (Goss), Rev R Symon; 3.15 E, Collegium Regale (Howells), Rise heart (Vaughan Williams); 6.30 Compline, The Precentor.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL: 7.45 M; 8 HC; 10.30 S Euch, Darke in E, This joyful Eastertide (Harris), The Dean; 3 E, This is the day the Lord hath made (Anon), Responses (Sumsion), Stanford in F, Sing ye to the Lord (Bairstow).

CHELMSFORD CATHEDRAL: 7.30 MP; 8 HC, Canon B Thompson; 9.30 Euch, Rev R Matthews; 11.15 S Euch, Sumsion in F, This joyful Eastertide (arr. Wood), Rev R Matthews; 6 Choral E, Collegium Regale (Howells), Since by Man came death & Hallelujah Chorus (Handel), Rev R Matthews.

CHESTER CATHEDRAL: 7.45 L; 8 HC; 10 Euch, & Baptism, Spirit of the living God (Wright), Magdalen cease from sobs and sighs (Hurford), Canon T Dennis; 11.30 Choral M, Te Deum & Jubilate (Stanford in B flat), The Dean; 3.30 Choral E, Second Service (Byrd); 6.30 ES, The Dean.

CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 10 M, Te Deum (Plainsong), Jubilate (Britten in C), Remember not Lord (Purcell), Rev D Maundrell; 11 S Euch, Missa Pange Lingua (Josquin des Prez), I heard a voice (Tomkins), The Treasurer.

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, Oxford: 8 HC; 10 M & Sermon, Canon Peirce; 11.15 S Euch, Mass for four voices (Byrd), Locus iste a Deo factus est (Bruckner), Canon Jeffery; 6 E, Stanford in C, This joyful Eastertide (Wood).

COVENTRY CATHEDRAL: 7.40 MP; 8 Communion; 10.30 Euch, Aston in F, Locus iste (Bruckner), Ave verum (Elgar), Canon P Oestreicher; 5 E, O praise the Lord (Batten), Responses (Tomkins), Ireland in F, Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley).

DURHAM CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, Canon M Perry; 10 M, Boyce in C, They day draws on with golden light (Bairstow), Rev C Beales; 11.15 HC, Ireland in C, O thou who at thy Eucharist didst pray (Woldicke), Rev M Parker; 3.30 E, Sumsion in A, Good Christian men rejoice and sing.

ELY CATHEDRAL: 8.15 HC, The Precentor; 10.30 S Euch, Darke in F, Veritas mea (Malcolm), The Dean; 3.45 E, Hawes in D, Let the people praise thee (Mathias).

EXETER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 9.45 S Euch, Festive Euch (Rawsthorne), Canon K Perry; 11.15 M, Responses (Rose), Te Deum (Stanford in B flat), Alleluia from Exultate Jubilate (Mozart), Canon A Mawson; 3 E, Responses (Radcliffe), Kelly in C, This joyful Eastertide (Wood); 6.30 Evening, Come ye faithful (Thatcher), Canon K Parry.

GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL: 8, 12.15 HC; 10.15 Euch, Missa Bell Amfitvit Algera (Lassus), Jesu the very thought (Shepherd), Canon R Grey; 3 E, Hereford Service (Lloyd), Rejoice in the Lord (Wright).

HEREFORD CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 10 Euch, Schubert in G, Tantum ergo (de Severac), The Dean; 11.30 M, Collegium Regale (Howells); 3.30 E, Second Service (Leighton), In esitu Israel (Wesley), Rev F Hancock.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 10.30 S Euch, Darke in F, Jubilate in B flat (Stanford), Regina caeli (Soriano); 3.30 E, Responses (Ayleward), Noble in B minor, Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley).

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL: 7.45 L; 8, 12.30 HC; 9.30 S Euch, Schubert in G, Sing joyfully (Byrd), The Dean; 11.15 M, Rutter & Britten in C, This have I done for my true love (Holst); 2 Thanksgiving; 3 E, Collegium Regale (Wood), Christ is now risen (Wilson), Ven C Laurence.

LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL: 8 MP & HC; 10.30 Euch, The Dean; 3 The Boys' Brigade; 4 HC.

MANCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8.45 M; 9 Euch; 10.30 S Euch, Sicut Cervus (Palestrina), Trumpet tune in D (Johnson); 6.30 EP.

NEWPORT CATHEDRAL: 10.30 S Euch, I am the bread of life (Lole); 6.30 Choral E, Brewer in D, Who shall roll away the stone? (Torrance).

NORWICH CATHEDRAL: 7.30 MP; 8, 9.15 HC; 10.30 S Euch, Mass in E minor (Bruckner), The Archdeacon of Norfolk; 3.30 E, Responses (Edward), Winchester Service (Howells), Christ the Lord is risen again (Rutter), Canon M Perham; 6.30 Night Prayer.

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL: 8.15 HC; 9.30 M, Te Deum in C (Britten), Jubilate in C (Stanford); 10.30 Euch, Sumsion in A & D, May the eternal God (Ridout), Just as I am (Chilcott), The Dean; 3.30 E, Watson in E, Christ being raised from the dead (Moore).

RIPON CATHEDRAL: 8 Euch, Canon M Glanville-Smith; 9.30 Parish Euch, Ireland in C, Sacerdotes Domini (Byrd), Rev Dr J Robinson; 11.30 M, Te Deum & Jubilate (Stanford in C), Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley); 12.30 Euch, Canon K Mason; 5.30 E, Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis (Brewer in D), With cheerful notes let all the earth (Handel), Canon T Munro.

ROCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 9.45 M, Responses (Rose), Te Deum & Jubilate (Noble in B minor), Rise heart thy Lord is risen (Vaughan Williams); 10.30 S Euch, Stanford in G & B flat, Rise heart thy Lord is risen (Ashfield), Canon R Lea; 3.15 E, The Vall (Vaughan Williams), Rise heart thy Lord is risen (Jeffreys).

SALISBURY CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, Canon D Slater; 10 Euch, Collegium Regale (Howells), Rise up my love (Willan), Canon B Duncan; 11.30 M, Te Deum in C (Boyce), Jubilate in C (Boyce), Solus ad victiman (Leighton), Canon D Slater; 3 E, Responses (Radcliffe), Collegium Regale (Howells), Blessed city heavenly Salem (Bairstow).

SHEFFIELD CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 10 MP; 10.30 S Euch, Ven M Paton; 6.30 Festal E & Sermon, Canon J Sinclair.

SOUTHWELL MINSTER: 7.45 L; 8 HC; 9.30 Parish Communion, Mrs C Dolby; 11 M, Te Deum (Ireland in C), Stanford in B flat, Magdaline cease from sobs and sighs (German 17th century), Sing we this morn (Bedell), The Precentor; 3.15 E, Responses (Clucas), Sumsion in A, Exultate Deo (Scarlatti).

TRURO CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 9 M; 10 S Euch, Darke in F, Locus iste (Bruckner), The Dean; 6 E, Howells in G, Greater love (Ireland), The Librarian.

WAKEFIELD CATHEDRAL: 8 HC, Canon D Baxter; 9.15 Parish Communion, Canon D Baxter; 11 Solemn Euch, Messe Brevis (Palestrina), Te Deum (Ireland in F), Haec Dies (Palestrina), Canon G Nairn-Briggs; 6.30 E, Stainer in B flat, Sing ye to the Lord (Bairstow), Canon G Nairn-Briggs.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY: 8 HC; 10 M, Responses (Rose), Stanford in B flat, Let all mortal flesh (Bairstow), Sis L Byrne; 11.15 Euch, Vaughan Williams in G minor, This joyful Eastertide (Anon.), Drop drop slow tears (Leighton), Canon D Hutt; 3 E, Third Service (Byrd), Sing joyfully (Byrd), Canon A Harvey; 5.45 Recital; 6.30 E, Sis H Markey.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL: 8 HC; 10.30 M, Jubilate in C (Britten), This joyful Eastertide (arr. Wood), Rev C Stewart; 11.30 Euch, Darke in F, Jesu the very thought of thee (Bairstow); 3.30 E, Collegium Regale (Howells), Te lucis ante terminum (Gardiner), Rev Dr A Barton.

YORK MINSTER: 8, 8.45 HC; 9.30 M; 10 S Euch, Missa Brevis (Seiber) and Sumsion in F, Rev E Norman; 11.30 S Euch, Sumsion in F; 4 E, Stanford in B flat, Exsultate Deo (Scarlatti), Rev Dr J Toy.

ST ASAPH CATHEDRAL, Clwyd: 8 HC; 11 Choral Euch, Darke in F, Jesu grant me this I pray (Gibbins arr. Bairstow), Very Rev K Goulstone; 3.30 Choral E, Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley).

ST GILES' CATHEDRAL, Edinburgh: 8 Morning HC, The Minister; 10 Morning HC, The Minister, O quam glorisoum (Victoria); 11.30 Science Festival, Benedicite (Jackson); 6 St Giles at Six, Recital; 8 Evening, Rev J Williams.

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL: 8 Euch; 10.30 Euch, Leighton in D, This joyful Eastertide (arr. Wood), Rev J Millard; 3.30 Choral E, Stanford in B flat.

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, London: 8 HC; 8.45 M; 11 S Euch, Mass for five voices (Byrd), Orbis factor (Plainsong), Regina coeli (Suriano), Canon J Halliburton; 3.15 E, Alcock in B flat, We have seen thy resurrection (Rachmaninov), Rev A Yates; 5 Recital.

RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL, Ennismore Gardens, London, SW7: 10.30 Divine Liturgy of St Basil; 6 Vigil for the Annunciation.

ALL SAINTS, Margaret Street, W1: 8.5.15 LM; 11 HM, Ireland in C, Rev I Davies; 6 E & B, Moeran in D, Rev P Johnstone.

ALL SOULS, Langham Place, W1: 9 Communion; 11 Rev R Trist; 6.30 Rev J Cook.

THE ASSUMPTION, Warwick Street, W1: 11 Missa in ille tempore (Monteverdi), Maria Magdalene (Gabrieli), Love is come again (anon).

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE CHURCH, Curzon St, W1: 11 Sunday School.

CROWN COURT CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, Covent Garden, WC2: 11.15 Rev C Owen; 12.20 HC; 6.30 Rev J McMahon.

FARM STREET, W1: 8, 9.30, 12.30, 4.15, 6.15 LM; 11 HM.

HOLY TRINITY BROMPTON, Brompton Road, SW7: 9 ASB HC, Rev R Thorpe; 11 Morning, Rev S Downham; 5,7 Informal Capt. B Read.

ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH: Iverna Gdns, W8: 11 Holy Mass, Archbishop Y Gizirian.

WESLEY'S CHAPEL, City Road, EC2: 11 Morning Service & HC, Rev Dr L Griffiths.

WESTMINSTER CENTRAL HALL (Methodist), SW1: 11 Rev E Fletcher; 6.30 HC, Rev B Lucas.

ST BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, Smithfield, EC1: 9 HC; 11 Choral Euch, Missa Maria Magdalene (Lobo), The Rector; 6.30 E, Chichester Service (Walton), Surrexit pastor bonus (Lhéritier), Regina coeli (Aichinger), The Rector.

ST BRIDE'S, Fleet Street, EC4: 11 Choral M & Euch, Short Service (Weelkes), Sumsion in F, Ubi caritas (Duruflé), Tantum ergo (Duruflé), Canon B Christianson; 6.30 Choral E, Responses (Rose), First Service (Ward), Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley), Guild Chaplain W Boulton.

ST CLEMENT DANES: 11 Royal Air Force Association Annual Service, Te Deum Laudamus (Stanford in B flat), Blessed be the God and Father (Wesley), Rev P Bishop.

ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, Pont Street, SW1: 11 Rev N Gardner; 6.30 Rev W Cairns.

ST ETHELDREDA'S, Ely Place: 11 S Mass, Missa Iste Confessor (Palestrina), Regina Caeli (Aichinger), O sacrum convivium (Croce).

ST GEORGE'S, Hanover Square, W1: 8.30 HC; 11 S Euch, Short Service (Batten), The Rector.

ST JAMES'S, Garlickhythe, EC4: 10.30 Low Sunday, Choral M, S. James' Choir, E Griffiths.

ST JOHN'S, Stratford E15: 11 Family C, Entry of the Queen of Sheba (Handel), Rev D Richards; 6.30 EP & Praise, Rev D Richards.

ST LUKE'S, Chelsea, SW3: 10.30 S Euch, Rev C Kevill-Davies; 12.15 HC; 6.30 EP, Rev C Kevill-Davies.

ST MARK'S, Regents Park Rd, NW1: 8 HC; 9.45 Family Communion; 11 S Euch, REv T Devonshire Jones.

ST MARGARET'S, Westminster, SW1: 11 S Euch, Lux et Origo (Plainsong), The Lord is my shepherd (Schubert), The bells of paradise (Gutteridge), Rev Dr P Bradshaw.

ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS, WC2: 8 HC; 9.45 Euch, Rev C Herbert; 11.30 Visitors, Rev C Herbert; 2.45 Chinese; 5 Choral E, Mr R Chan; 6.30 Evening.

ST MARY ABBOTS CHURCH, Kensington W8: 8,12.30 HC; 9.30 Parish Euch, Rev F Gelli; 11.15 Choral M, Rev F Gelli; 6.30 E, Mrs E Haines.

ST MARY'S, Bourne Street, SW1: 9,10,7 LM; 11 HM, Missa Puisque j'ai pedu (Lassus), Fr S Young; 6 Solemn E & B.

ST MARY-THE-VIRGIN, Primrose Hill: 8 HC; 10.30 Parish Euch, New English Hymnal Folk Mass, Mrs R Berke; 6 EP.

ST MARYLEBONE, Marylebone Road, W1: 8 HC; 11 Choral Euch, Mass (Merbecke), Rev P Wells; 6.30 Healing, Rev T Clark.

ST PAUL'S, Wilton Place, SW1: 8,9 HC; 11 Solemn Euch, Rev C Courtauld.

ST PETER'S, Eaton Square, SW1: 8.15 HC; 10 Family Euch; 11 S Euch, Missa Cum Jubilo (Duruflé), Panis angelicus (Franck), Fr W Keyes.

ST SIMON ZELOTES, Milner St, SW3: 8 HC; 11 M, Preb J Pearce; 6.30 E, Preb M McGowan.

CHAPEL ROYAL OF ST PETER AD VINCULA, HM Tower of London: 9.15 HC, Rev P Abram; 11 M & Sermon, Te Deum (Chant), Jubilate (Walton), Regina caeli (Howells), Rev P Abram.

CHAPEL ROYAL, St. James's Palace: 8.30 HC; 11.15 S Euch, Mass in Three Parts (Byrd), Canon I Smith-Cameron.

GROSVENOR CHAPEL, South Audley Street, W1: 11 S Euch, Rev Dayton Dewey.

QUEEN'S CHAPEL OF THE SAVOY, WC2: 11 HC, The Chaplain.

GRAY'S INN CHAPEL, 8 South Sq, WC1R: 8.30 HC.

THE TEMPLE CHURCH, Fleet Street: 8.30 HC; 11.15 MP, Te Deum Laudamus (Wood in E), Jubilate Deo (Wood in G), Woman why weepest thou? (Schutz), The Master.

GUARDS CHAPEL, Wellington Barracks, SW1: 11 Choral HC, Schubert in G, Up my heart (Bach), Band of the Grenadier Guards, Rev R Price.

ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE CHAPEL, Greenwich, SE10: 11 S Euch BCP, Sumsion in F, Jesus fount of consolation, Rev C French.

PERSONAL COLUMN

BMDS: 0171 680 6880
PRIVATE: 0171 481 4000

TRADE: 0171 481 1982
FAX: 0171 481 9313

Put yourselves at the disposal of God; think of yourselves as raised from death to life, and yield your bodies to God as implements for doing right. Romans 6 : 13

BIRTHS

ASTLEY BIRTWISTLE - On April 2nd, to April (née Younghusband) and Pip, a son, Roland, a brother for Edward, Amelia and James.

CLARK - On 2nd April 1997, to Cecelia (née Hill) and Giles, a son, Henry Justin.

CONSTANT - On 4th April 1997, to Lucia (née Meynell) and Robbie, a son, Henry Ivo Meyricke "Harry", a brother for Amy.

CRAMPTON - On 31st March at University College Hospital, London, to Nicola and Robert, a son, Samuel Reginald Almond.

GLIKSTEN - On April 2nd, to Paula (née Sharpe) and Nigel, a daughter, Lara Elizabeth, a sister for Barnaby.

HAYES - On March 30th 1997, to Suzette (née Swiny) and Robert, a son, Theodore Charles Archibald, a brother for Frederick.

HINDLEY - On 2nd April 1997, to Elizabeth (née Rashleigh) and Guy, a daughter, Laura Alexis.

JONES - On March 11th, to Jill (née Skelton) and Vaughan, a son, Curtis Mitchell.

KANE - Frank and Emma (née Johnson) are thrilled skinny to announce the birth on 25th March of their son Patrick Thomas Joseph, a brother for Frances Rose.

KING - Brian and Tanya are pleased to announce the birth of Nathan Ashby King on 3rd April at Queen Charlotte's, weighing 5lbs 4oz.

LAVELLE - On 31st March 1997, to Amanda and Martin, another beautiful son, Matthew Anthony; to Harry a brother. Already in training for Rugby World Cup 2019.

MITCHELL - On March 12th, to Stewart and Debbie (née Boxall), a son, Samuel George, the first, but not last, born.

MONTINARO - On March 31st at The Portland Hospital to Paige and Ennio a son, Alessandro bringing us great joy.

MORGAN - On March 28th at The Portland Hospital, to Amanda and Peter, a beautiful daughter, Stephanie Rebecca, a sister for Laura and Max. With special thanks to Professor Craft and all of his team.

SLADE - On 23rd March 1997, to Lucy (née Cacanas) and Richard, two sons, Jack Alexander and Thomas Patrick.

STRAUSS - On April 1st at The Portland Hospital, to Lisa (née Duke) and Jonathan, a daughter, Ariella Rebekah.

SULKE - On March 24th a new generation unveiled by Sarah (née Boon) and Neil a son, Rafe Walter.

TATHAM - On April 1st 1997, in Paris, to Heather (née Allen) and Charles, a son, Luke Alexander, a brother for Jessica.

WILLCOX - On 28th March 1997, to Simon and Kate (née Wiley), a daughter, Susannah Mary.

RUBY ANNIVERSARIES

WILLIAMS - Bert and Jo. Congratulations to a very special couple on your Ruby Wedding Anniversary Sunday April 6th 1997. All our love Stacey, Ian, John, Jane, Emily, James and William.

GOLDEN ANNIVERSARIES

WALLBANK:MOORE - On 5th April 1947 at Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, Edward Victor Wallbank to Joyce Lilian Moore. Congratulations and much love, Valerie.

DEATHS

ADAMS - Philippa Louisa died suddenly at home on 26th March. Funeral private at her request.

BAKER-CRESSWELL - Peacefully on April 4th Rona at Budle in Northumberland: 30 days after the death of her beloved husband Joe, to whom she had been married for 70 years. Funeral private, no letters, nor flowers at her request.

BARNES - Monica of West Malling and formerly of Altea on April 3rd peacefully after a very short illness, devoted wife of the late John and much loved mother of Nick, Bob and Oliver. Funeral Service at St Mary the Virgin, West Malling on Thursday April 10th at 12.30 pm followed by private cremation. Family flowers only. Donations, if wished, to The Leukaemia Research Fund, 43 Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3JJ.

CHISHOLM OF CHISHOLM - On April 3rd at West Suffolk Hospital, Bury St Edmunds, Fortified by the Rites of the Holy Church, Alastair Hamish Wiland André Fraser Chisholm of Chisholm, beloved husband of Rosemary, loving father of Hamish, Susan, Theresa, Claire and Lucy and a dear grandad of his eight grandchildren. R.I.P.

CLIBBORN - Victoria peacefully in Barcelona, Spain, on 2nd April. Beloved wife of the late Donovan Harold Clibborn C.M.G., mother and grandmother. Private family funeral took place in Barcelona on Friday 4th April.

CONVILLE - On 31st March 1997 in Poole Hospital, Bessie aged 90 years, beloved sister of the late Mary and a very dear aunt who will be sadly missed. Funeral Service will be held at Poole Crematorium on Wednesday 9th April 1997 at 11.30 am. Flowers and enquiries to Mews Funeral Directors, 3 Bournemouth Road, Parkstone, Poole, tel: (01202) 741169.

COONEY - James (Jim) died peacefully aged 72 years on March 31st in Southampton General Hospital. He will be very sadly missed and remembered always by his wife Barbara, his sons Stephen, John and Peter and their families. Funeral Mass will take place at the Catholic Church of Our Lady of the Rosary, Old Bursledon, on Tuesday April 8th at 11.30 am followed by burial at Bursledon Parish Cemetery. Flowers to B. Matthews, 146 Portsmouth Road, Woolston, Southampton.

de WILDER - Robert Seraphine Louis Maria, Officer of the Order of Oranje Nassau, aged 65, on April 3rd 1997 at Naarden (Holland). Beloved Husband and Father, of Jennifer (van der Lande), and Charlie, Fiona, Robin, Eliane and Sandra. RIP.

GAUL - Ann Christine (née Bell) on April 1st 1997, peacefully at Charing Cross Hospital. Funeral at North Sheen Cemetery on Thursday April 10th at 3 pm. Flowers to Percy Lodge, Richmond.

FLEMING - Sydney William passed away peacefully on 1st April 1997 at Maidstone Hospital after a short illness. Sadly missed by Ann and Richard. Funeral Service will take place on Friday April 18th 1997 at Vinters Park Crematorium, Maidstone. Enquiries please to Michael A. Lawrence, tel: (01622) 661678.

HAMILTON-SMYTHE - Peacefully on April 4th 1997 Pamela Conyngham (née Holt-Needham), widow of Arthur. Private cremation. Memorial Service at St Mary's Church, Fairford, on Monday 14th April at 12.30pm. Donations if wished to St Mary's Church, Fairford.

HARGREAVES - Ezra Ronald suddenly but peacefully on March 25th aged 80, loving husband of Peggy, father of David, Robert and Colin and loving grandfather of twelve grandchildren. Funeral has taken place.

HEATH - On April 2nd 1997 after a short illness Molly of Rudgwick, Sussex. Much loved mother of Angela, Vanessa and John and devoted grandmother. Private cremation. Family flowers only, donations if desired to Church of England Childrens' Society. Service of Thanksgiving to be arranged. All enquiries to Pimms Funeral Services, tel: (01483) 567394.

HELLMUTH - Edward John William CBE formerly of Midland Bank PLC, died March 28th on holiday at Madeira, Portugal, in his 90th year. Widower of Erica, father of Gail and grandfather of Nicholas and Deborah and father-in-law of Alex. Funeral Service will take place on Friday 11th April 1997 at the North East Surrey Crematorium at 4.30pm. All enquiries to Fredk. W. Paine, tel: (0181) 946-1974.

HENDERSON - Jean, Barrister, many years a resident of Hampstead Garden Suburb. On April 1st aged 97 peacefully at Benslow Nursing Home, Hitchin. Dearly loved aunt, cousin, friend and colleague. Memorial Meeting to be announced later.

LOWNSBROUGH - On 31st March 1997 peacefully, Louise (née Bolton) aged 91 years beloved wife of Norman and mother of Gillian. Requiem Mass at St Ann's Church, Banstead on Thursday 10th April at 10am. Rest in peace.

MAXWELL - Peacefully at Denham Manor N/H in Denham, Bucks., aged 89 years, Dr. Robert Maxwell, general practitioner in East Ham for over forty years. Widower of Marita, much loved father of Bennett and grandfather of Harriet. Funeral on Tuesday 8th April 2.30 pm at Golders Green Crematorium. No flowers please but donations to The Cameron Fund, BMA Charities, BMA House, London WC1H 9JP.

McAULIFFE CURTIN - John (Mac) FRCSI FACS April 3rd 1997 died peacefully at home, beloved husband of the late Maeve (née Kennedy), loving father of Christine, Denise, Frances, Barbara, Philippa and Ruth and devoted grandfather of Zia, Darragh, Hugh, Natalie and David. Deeply regretted by his daughters, sister Rena, sons-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends. Rest In Peace. Funeral today Saturday after 11 o'clock Mass in the Church of the Three Patrons, Rathgar, Dublin to St Joseph's Cemetery, Bohernabreena. "Into your hands O'Lord I commend my spirit".

NIEMAN - Eleonora Maya on April 2nd while asleep at home after a courageous fight against cancer. Loving and loved mother of Mark and Joanna and grandmother of Lucy and Emma. Funeral Mass at St Hugh of Lincoln, Hensington Road, Woodstock, at 12 noon Wednesday 9th April followed by committal prayers at Oxford Crematorium 1.15 pm. No flowers please, but donations in lieu to the anti-smoking charity QUIT, c/o Reeves & Pain, 288 Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4TE, would be welcome.

PARRY - Violet Irene (née Dubberley) peacefully at Tyspane Nursing Home after many months of difficulty following a savage stroke suffered January 1994. Widow of William Nelson, mother of Charmian, grandmother of Mark and great-grandmother of Jack and Gayle. Family flowers only please. Donations if wished to Holmesleigh Funeral Services, Braunton, North Devon, in aid of Redwings Horse Sanctuary. Cremation Barnstaple 10.30am 8th April.

PIRIE - Norman Wingate died 29th March at home in Harpenden aged 89 years. Funeral at West Hertfordshire Crematorium, High Elms Lane, Garston, Herts. (M25 Junction 21A) on Friday April 18th at 11.30am, followed by a Commemorative Gathering and Buffet at The Manor House, Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden, Herts. from 12.30 pm. Family flowers only. Any donations direct to OXFAM.

ROBINSON - Paul Maltby, died suddenly and peacefully at home, 3rd April 1997, aged 87. Much loved husband of Hope, father of Penny and Vicky, Grandpops to Sophie and Johnny, Great-grandpops to Anya. No funeral as Paul left his body for medical research. Please no flowers: donations if wished to the British Heart Foundation.

SAWYER - Enid Joyce (Joy), suddenly, but peacefully at home on March 31st 1997; loving mother of Diana, Gaye and Pam, greatly loved grandmother of John, Lucy, Stephen, Christopher, George, Edward and Victoria and Charles and James. Funeral at the Chiltern's Crematorium on Thursday, 10th April at 2.30 pm. Family flowers only. Enquiries to Stuart Price Funeral Service, 13 Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks, HP6 5BD. Tel: (01494) 434484.

SHERLIKER - On 31st March James Alexander, beloved husband of Joyce, suddenly at home. Funeral Service at Isle of Wight Crematorium 1pm Thursday 10th April. Flowers and enquiries H.V. Taylor & Son Ltd., (01983) 562082.

SHOUKRY - Dr. Ezz-El-Din LRCP-MRCS passed peacefully at home on Thursday 3rd April 1997. Beloved husband of Joan and wonderful father of Gamal, Karim and Gillian and proud grandfather of Rebekah. Will always be with us. A Service of Thanksgiving will be held on Wednesday April 9th at 12.30 pm at Christ Church, Temple Sheen, SW14. Flowers or donations to Holmes & Daughters F/D, 461 Upper Richmond Road West, East Sheen, SW14 7PU.

SMITH - Phyllis on April 1st peacefully in her sleep, beloved wife of the late Cyril Smith and mother to Christopher and Hazel and grandmother and friend. Funeral Friday April 11th. Enquiries: Selim Smith, 74 Prestbury Road, Cheltenham, (01242) 525383.

SMYTH - On March 31st, Dr. Villiers Owen Greville. Will be sadly missed by his wife Jennifer and all his family. Funeral details (01275) 852307.

TAFFS - Leslie Frank, PhD. FRCVS. On Easter Saturday 29th March 1997 peacefully at home after a courageous fight against illness. Dearly loved husband of Carol and father of Andrew and Joanna. Private cremation on Friday 11th April followed by Service of Thanksgiving at St Helens Church, Wheathampstead, Herts. at 12.30 pm. Family flowers only. Donations if desired to Cancer Relief MacMillan Fund c/o L.C. Weston Funeral Director, Unit 25, 17 Leyton Road, Harpenden, Herts. Tel: (01582) 712865.

VANS AGNEW - Dr. William (Bill) on April 2nd, aged 71, at Ryde, Isle of Wight. Much loved husband of Peggy, father and grandfather. Service of Thanksgiving at St Margaret's Church, Halstead, Kent, April 11th at 2 pm. Donations if desired to the Alzheimer's Society c/o Francis Chappell & Sons, 27 London Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1AR.

WEBB - (Née Wilde) Margaret Beryl peacefully in N.H.H. Basingstoke on 3rd April 1997 aged 72 years. Dearly loved wife of Ron and mother of Anne, Patricia and Yvonne. Will be greatly missed by her family and friends. Funeral Service at Aldershot Crematorium on Tuesday 8th April at 12 noon. Flowers and all enquiries to Alexander and Dry, 1 Seal Road, Basingstoke, tel: (01256) 844663.

IN MEMORIAM — PRIVATE

BELL - On April 5th, 1911, suddenly at Printing House Square, E.C., Charles Frederick Moberley Bell, Managing Director of The Times, of 22, Park Crescent, Portland Place, W., aged 64.

DUTTON - William (Bill). In grateful memory of a loyal and steadfast friend.

HITCHCOCK - Michael, died a year ago 6th April 1996, so very deeply loved and remembered this day and every day. Karin.

VYVYAN - (Crown) Jennifer. Beloved.

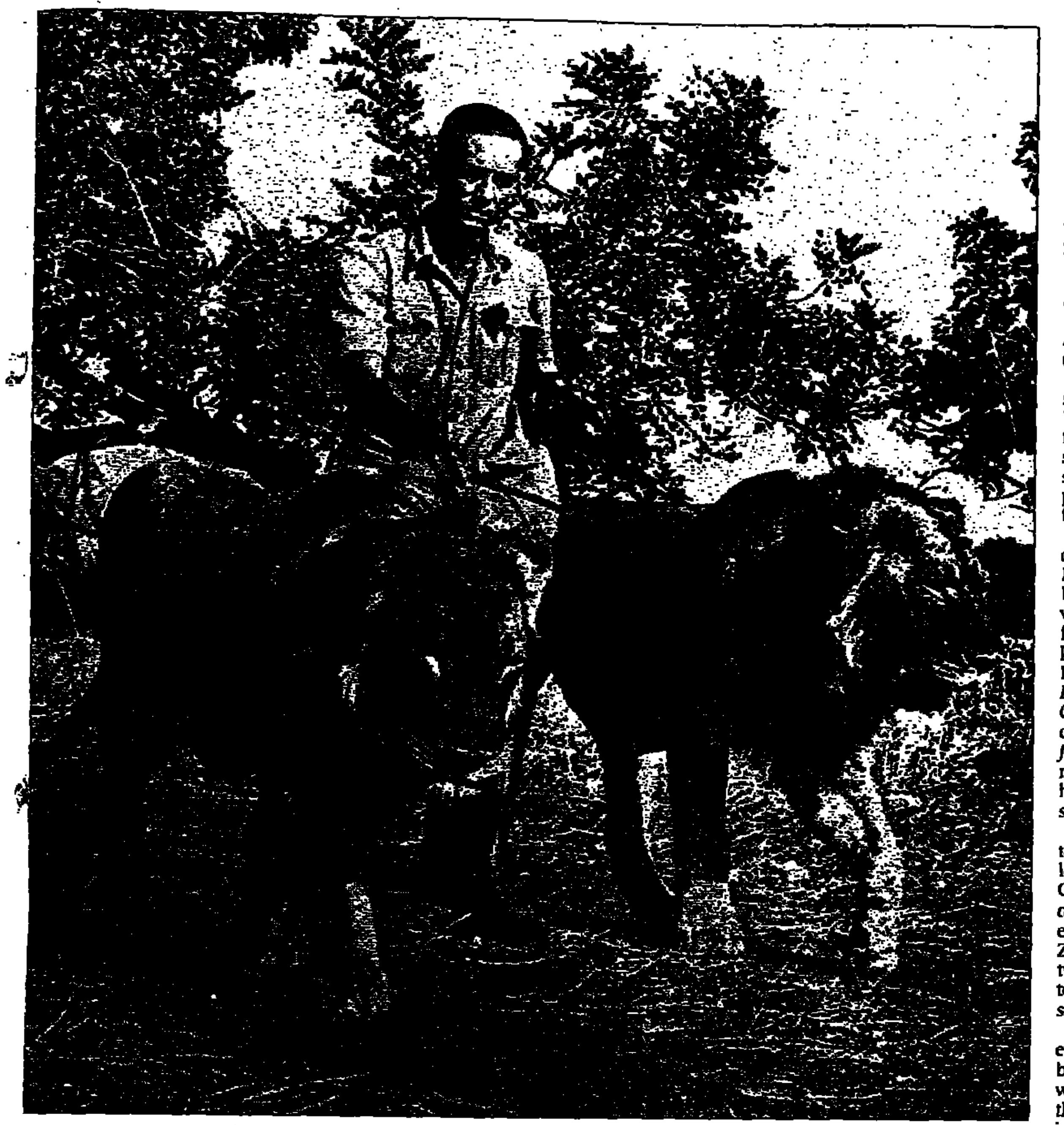
IN MEMORIAM — WAR

DODD - In proud and loving memory of Captain Ian Alastair Scott Dodd, 6th Gurkha Rifles, a Chindit, killed in Burma 6th April 1944.

هكذا من الاعلى

هكذا من الاصل

NORMAN CARR



Norman Carr, MBE, conservationist, died in South Africa on April 1 aged 84. He was born on July 19, 1912.

Norman Carr was by no means the vainest of men, but he leaves behind him a monument that makes the Great Pyramid of Cheops look like a pimple. No mere pile of bricks for Carr: his monument covers more than 14,000 square kilometres.

Its name is the Luangwa Valley in Zambia, a southern extension of the great African Rift which is cut through by the Luangwa River, a tributary of the Zambezi. This is divided principally into two national parks. They are considered by many to be the finest national parks in Africa.

There is hardly anything in the Luangwa Valley upon which Carr has not left his mark. Today it is one of the richest wildlife destinations on the planet, holding impressive populations of elephant and lion. It is also, because of Carr's innovative mind, the best place in Africa to see leopard.

Carr's belief was in tourism. Tourists, he realised, brought foreign exchange, valuable to a country emerging from colonial rule. He saw the "dollar value" of wildlife. Carr also worked right from the beginning to make sure that local villagers profited from the richness of the wildlife. He wanted it to become a source of local income and local pride.

This policy is now a commonplace of conservation worldwide; but it has only recently become the standard practice of international organisations. Carr was promoting such policies in the 1950s.

But Carr was much more than a practical administrator or a master of the tourist industry. He was, quintessentially, a man of the bush. He had a fierce and ungovernable love for the world's wild places, and it was in the bush that he always felt himself most at home.

A few years ago Carr was taking a group of tourists on a walking safari, in the company of an armed game scout, when they had the misfortune to be charged by an angry lioness. The game scout fired five shots, but the beast was not deterred by the warning. Even when it was hit in the leg it did not turn back. Meanwhile, Carr had rounded up his walking party and established them on the top of a termite mound. The lioness made her attack. Carr, a slight man then in his late sixties, fought the lioness off with his walking stick. It was thanks to his courage that no one was harmed.

Norman Joseph Carr was born in Mozambique and educated in England, but emerged without a single academic qualification. In 1939 he was appointed elephant control officer in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia; the following year, after the outbreak of the Second World War, he joined the King's African Rifles, and served in Abyssinia, finishing with the rank of captain.

After the war, he became a game-ranger back in Northern Rhodesia. In 1950 he opened the first tourist camp in that country. He established hunting safaris operated by Game Department staff, making it a priority that local people received both money and meat from the enterprise.

He was the first warden of the country's first National Park, the Kafue. Here he raised two lion cubs, Big Boy and Little Boy, and took them with him wherever he went. Within four years, the pair were capable of killing for themselves and Carr celebrated this in one of his six books, *Return to the Wilds*. Interestingly, Carr's wife, Barbara, wrote a kind of counterblast to this, a book called *Not for me the Wilds*. The life of the bush never appealed to her and she and her husband were later to live very separate lives.

In 1960 Carr went to report on the tourist potential of the Luangwa Valley. He subsequently retired from the Game Department and started up his own safari operations. Thus, as Northern Rhodesia became independent Zambia in 1964, the Luangwa Valley turned from a forgotten wilderness to a tourist Mecca without ceasing for a second to be utterly wild.

The great thing about Carr, however, was not simply his love of the bush, but his delight in sharing it. He did not want to keep it for himself: he knew that way spelt ultimate destruction. He inaugurated the idea of the walking safari: the last great adventure in which large beasts relate to human walkers not as intruders, but as one mammal to another. Carr also initiated the idea of night drives, in which the nocturnal life of the bush can be seen in a powerful spotlight. This helped to make the leopard, normally the most elusive of beasts, one of the star attractions of the valley.

But if Carr was one of the last of the "old Africa hands", he was also one of the pioneers of the new Africa. In changing economic and political times, he saw a conservationist opportunity and made it work — to the benefit of the country, of the local people, of the visitors and, perhaps most importantly, to the benefit of the wildlife itself.

He is survived by his wife and by their son and two daughters.

JOLIE GABOR

Jolie Gabor (right) with her daughters Eva (left) and Zsa Zsa (centre)

Jolie Gabor, Hungarian socialite and businesswoman, died on April 1 aged 96. She was born on September 29, 1900.

JOLIE GABOR was the mother of the three Gabor sisters — Zsa Zsa, Eva and Magda — who captivated Hollywood society during the 1950s. More of an *Auntie Mame* character than a conventional mother, she instilled her daughters with that shrewd, feminine approach to life which proved so useful to them in their minor film careers and advantageous marriages. "Momma trained us to look on ourselves as we would a diamond, appraising only its value, brilliance and ultimate setting," was how Eva described it.

Diamonds were a *leitmotif* of the Gabor family. So were clouds of blonde hair and scent, delightful Hungarian accents and half inch-long artificial eyelashes. As a young bride Jolie had wanted only sons, but having produced daughter after daughter she bowed to fate and set about raising her girls to be charming and accomplished. "I wanted them to play the piano so magnificently that a Rubinstein would be green with envy," she said. "They learnt to swim, to ride, to play tennis. They all went to the best finishing schools. Who wants a man who wants a dowry?"

Frustrated personal ambition may have played a part in Jolie's aspirations for her daughters. Jolie Kende grew up in Budapest, where her father owned a jewellery business. She was born at the turn of the century but never admitted to it, reasoning (like Oscar Wilde) that it looked calculating for a woman to be quite truthful about her age.

Her education consisted of nannies, boarding school and a Swiss finishing school and was intended to equip her for a good marriage. Instead, she pleaded unsuccessfully for permission to become an actress and, when her parents said no, decided that the best escape was to find a man.

Her first marriage — "a disaster" — was to William Gabor, a businessman twice her age. He initially agreed to a divorce after six months, to leave her free to pursue a career on the stage. But, swiftly falling pregnant, she had to stall her plans. She opened a jewellery shop instead and it was to be 22 years before she finally divorced Gabor.

Of her daughters, who all arrived in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s, Eva always wanted to act, Magda never, and Zsa Zsa drifted into the profession. But it was the last who showed the real talent for self-promotion. Not long after arrival in New York, she married the hotel magnate Conrad Hilton and cabled her mother to join her. The newly divorced Jolie arrived with only $100 in cash, a sable coat and a 30-carat diamond ring. But Hilton's money enabled her to open jewellery stores in Madison Avenue and Palm Springs.

Her apartment on the Upper East Side was much visited by her daughters' suitors after the war, and her fridge bulged with orchids and bottles of champagne.

Her matrimonial history was as chequered as that of her daughters. There was a second marriage, so brief that the family affected not to remember the man's name, and a long happy third marriage, in 1957, to Count Edmond de Szigethy whom Jolie had known ever since Budapest days.

He had arrived in America in 1956 with only $27 to his name, and immediately spent $20 on flowers for Jolie — an act of such rash generosity that Jolie felt compelled to marry him. Like all Hungarians, he worshipped beauty, and kept his wife on a regime of vitamin pills and expensive face creams. Whether because of these, good genes or more drastic surgical measures, Jolie remained remarkably youthful-looking well into old age.

Her own buoyant self-confidence was probably the greatest gift Jolie gave to her daughters.

She is survived by two of them, Zsa Zsa and Magda. Her husband died in 1989 and her youngest daughter Eva in 1995.

ERIK NELSON

Erik Nelson, aviator, died in Maryland on March 20 aged 89. He was born in Warwickshire on March 24, 1907.

ERIK NELSON had the heart of an artist and the mind of an engineer. If he excelled as a designer of aircraft, his greatest pride and pleasure always came when he could test out his own designs as a pilot. His expertise in the field of aviation was to prove of great value, not only to the RAF during the Second World War, but later to the commercial airline industry.

Erik Blyth Nelson was born in Warwickshire. He was educated at St Edward's School, Oxford, where he distinguished himself in the chapel choir. But an adolescence during which he spent the equivalent of three days a week in chapel disinclined him from becoming a regular churchgoer in later life.

It was motorbikes which fascinated him as a schoolboy. When he was still under-age, he bought an old bike for £5. Although a headlong crash with another cyclist landed him in trouble with the law, it made him something of a hero at St Edward's.

Nelson won a choral scholarship to study music at New College, Oxford. He showed some talent for composition and was a competent pianist, but he knew that he would never be a professional player or composer. Not wanting to teach piano to "snotty-nosed kids" for the rest of his life, he decided to leave New College after his first year. Promising that he would knuckle down to work, he persuaded his father to buy him an apprenticeship with Alfred Herbert, machine tool-makers in Coventry.

He went on to take a job as service manager for the motorbike manufacturers Burney & Blackburne. He raced professionally at the Brooklands track and for seven years was awarded the gold star given to those who won races at speeds averaging more than 100mph.

In 1930 the company went bankrupt and Nelson moved on to work for the flying school at Brooklands. Joining the RAF Reserve, he gained his licences to fly, repair and inspect aircraft. He became manager of the A. V. Roe depot at London Airport, Heston, and in 1933 became chief flight instructor at the college of aeronautical engineering in London. He also worked for a year as a stunt pilot for Cobbham's Flying Circus.

In 1934 Nelson was sent by the Colonial Office to Hong Kong as aviation adviser to construct and manage what has become Kai Tak International Airport. There he became an expert in Sunderland flying boats for 230 Squadron, RAF. But informally he worked with a friend for Pan American Airways, scouting its Pacific routes.

Nelson loved life in Hong Kong where, outside his work, he led a glamorous colonial life, riding to hounds and partying wildly as well as keeping up with the theatre world which had always interested him. Nelson remained a lifelong friend of Laurence Olivier who had been at school with him and he was also a friend of Noël Coward.

With the outbreak of war in the Far East, Nelson was called to active duty by the RAF. He flew patrols across the South China Sea and Indian Ocean for a while, before being recalled to Britain at the end of 1940 where he served briefly with Bomber Command. It was soon discovered, however, that he had considerable experience as a test pilot and instructor and he was taken off Bomber Command and set to work training new pilots. He found it a stressful job. Of one batch of 19 Poles sent to be trained by him, seven killed themselves.

He was relieved, therefore, when his expertise with flying boats was brought to Lord Beaverbrook's attention and he was removed from his instructor's post. London at that time was seeking ways to manage its difficult and dangerous cross-Atlantic communications and Nelson was posted to Baltimore to manage the BOAC flying boat base used for the VIP transport service. He flew Winston Churchill, Lord Beaverbrook and other leading members of the War Cabinet.

In early 1944 he was transferred to Montreal, Canada, to manage the Return Ferry Service which flew new and repaired US and Canadian-made aircraft to Britain for use by Bomber Command, as well as cargo and VIP passengers

Towards the end of the war, as a group captain with 110 Wing, RAF, Nelson had been charged with the responsibility of securing captured airfields as Allied troops advanced across Europe. He was to put the knowledge he thereby gained to good use after the war was over. Given a job as BOAC's operations director, this network became the basis of BOAC's postwar routes.

Then, in 1950, Nelson decided to emigrate to America. There he managed the East Coast, Canadian, Latin American and Caribbean sales operations of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. In 1961 he became president of Lockheed in Canada.

Nelson retired in 1970, though he was always to maintain his interest in the aviation industry. In 1978 he served as special counsel to a US congressional committee investigating aircraft safety. And in 1986, the Chinese Government, finding that Nelson was still alive, flew him out to Hong Kong to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Kai Tak Airport.

In retirement he lived in Maryland. He would attend Formula One races until old age, often meeting former colleagues there. He wrote prolifically for local newspapers on anything from UFOs, in which he believed passionately, to the aircraft which he had always loved. He also continued both to listen to and to play music. He had a Steinway in his drawing room.

Though the last half of his life had been spent in America, he remained an Englishman to the end, taking a teasing delight in mispronouncing American words.

He is survived by his wife Jane and their two sons.

PERSONAL COLUMN

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ON THIS DAY

April 5, 1897

* * *

The Joachim Quartet, founded by Brahms's great friend Joseph Joachim, the violinist, was appearing in London at the time and Blanche Marchesi sang Brahms's Von Ewiger Liebe *at the concert; some of the audience would have known that the composer was dead*

DEATH OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

We regret to announce that Herr Johannes Brahms, the illustrious composer, died in Vienna at 9 o'clock on Saturday morning from acute disease of the liver, from which he had been suffering for many months. The funeral ceremony will take place on Tuesday afternoon at the German Protestant Church; it is probable that the master's remains will be deposited in the municipal cemetery of Vienna.

It is a far easier task to enumerate the outward events of Brahms's life than to attempt to assess his exact ultimate position among the great masters of music, though it is certain that his place is with the greatest of these. Reckoned by the ordinary standards of court or official appointments, his career has been one of the least eventful that the history of art can show. The son of a double-bass player in the opera band at Hamburg, where he was born on May 7, 1833, he was placed, while still a boy, under the care and tuition of Eduard Marxsen of Altona, with the view of his becoming a pianoforte player. At the age of 20 he was engaged by a once famous violinist, Remenyi, as accompanist on a concert tour, in the course of which the current of his career was completely altered by a meeting with Joachim, whose friendship had the most important results on his life. Through the great violinist he was introduced to Schumann, who, on the strength of the compositions submitted to him — the earliest pianoforte sonatas and the first set of songs — declared the young man to be the composer for whose advent all Germany was as it were waiting.

THE JOACHIM QUARTET

Before a crowded and enthusiastic audience, the most famous quartet organisation in the world made its first collective appearance in London on Saturday afternoon at the Popular Concerts. The perfect unanimity of phrasing and interpretation which distinguishes these players has occasionally been exhibited by other associations of the kind, and a certain measure of this desirable quality is the natural result of long companionship and community of artistic views and ideals. It is sometimes possible to say of four string players: "They play like one man," but in this case it is necessary to add, "and that one man is a great master of interpretation." Herr Kruse, the second violin, has caught so much of his illustrious chief's spirit that a phrase given out by him is in complete sympathy with, not in violent contrast to, the theme as it appears in the hands of Joachim; and the perfect agreement among the artists appears less as the obedience of three minds to one dominating influence than as the co-ordinate inspiration of all four players. Herr Wirth, the tenor, has a fine tone, remarkable for the way in which it blends with the other instruments, and Herr Hausmann, who is happily no stranger to English audiences, is, of course, an artist of the very highest rank.

In such a programme any less perfect singing than Mme Blanche Marchesi's would have been an intrusion, but her delivery of the exquisite *Von Ewiger Liebe* of the master who had passed away but a few hours before the concert began was impressive in the extreme.

Nth

THE TIMES TODAY

SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

NEWS

Blair accused of insulting the Scots

■ Tony Blair suffered his worst day of the campaign after comparing Labour's proposed Scottish parliament to an English parish council and banning it from raising taxes for at least five years. Mr Blair further upset his Scottish troops by saying that if Labour were elected, sovereignty would remain with Westminster and with "me as an English MP" .... **Page 1**

Ashdown plea for 'can-do' spirit

■ Paddy Ashdown rejected suggestions that a Liberal Democrat vote would be wasted as he promised fresh spending on education and health, financed by an extra penny on income tax and a new top rate of 50p .... **Page 1**

Election 97, pages 9-15

Young hopeful

Joe Tizzard, the 17-year-old son of a Dorset dairy farmer, will attempt to become the youngest Grand National winner for 60 years today .... **Page 1**

Good start

The ideal breakfast is a glass of orange juice, a cup of coffee and a bowl of cereal .... **Page 1**

Teachers boo

The Education Secretary Gillian Shephard was booed and hissed by more than 500 teachers when she said that industrial action was unacceptable behaviour .... **Page 2**

Bomb alert chaos

Large areas of central London were grid-locked after bomb alerts at mainline stations forced the closure of main roads .... **Page 2**

Exit Escort

The Ford Escort, one of the most *famous yet derided names in motoring*, is nearing the end of the road .... **Page 3**

Accountants' bonus

Accountants are gearing up for a bonanza when nine million self-assessment forms for income tax are sent out .... **Page 4**

Winning pets

Pensioners and the infirm who need pets for companionship will soon be able to apply for lottery grants .... **Page 6**

China dispute

Germany joined France in rejecting action for the first time against China by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees .... **Page 16**

Democrat 'sleaze'

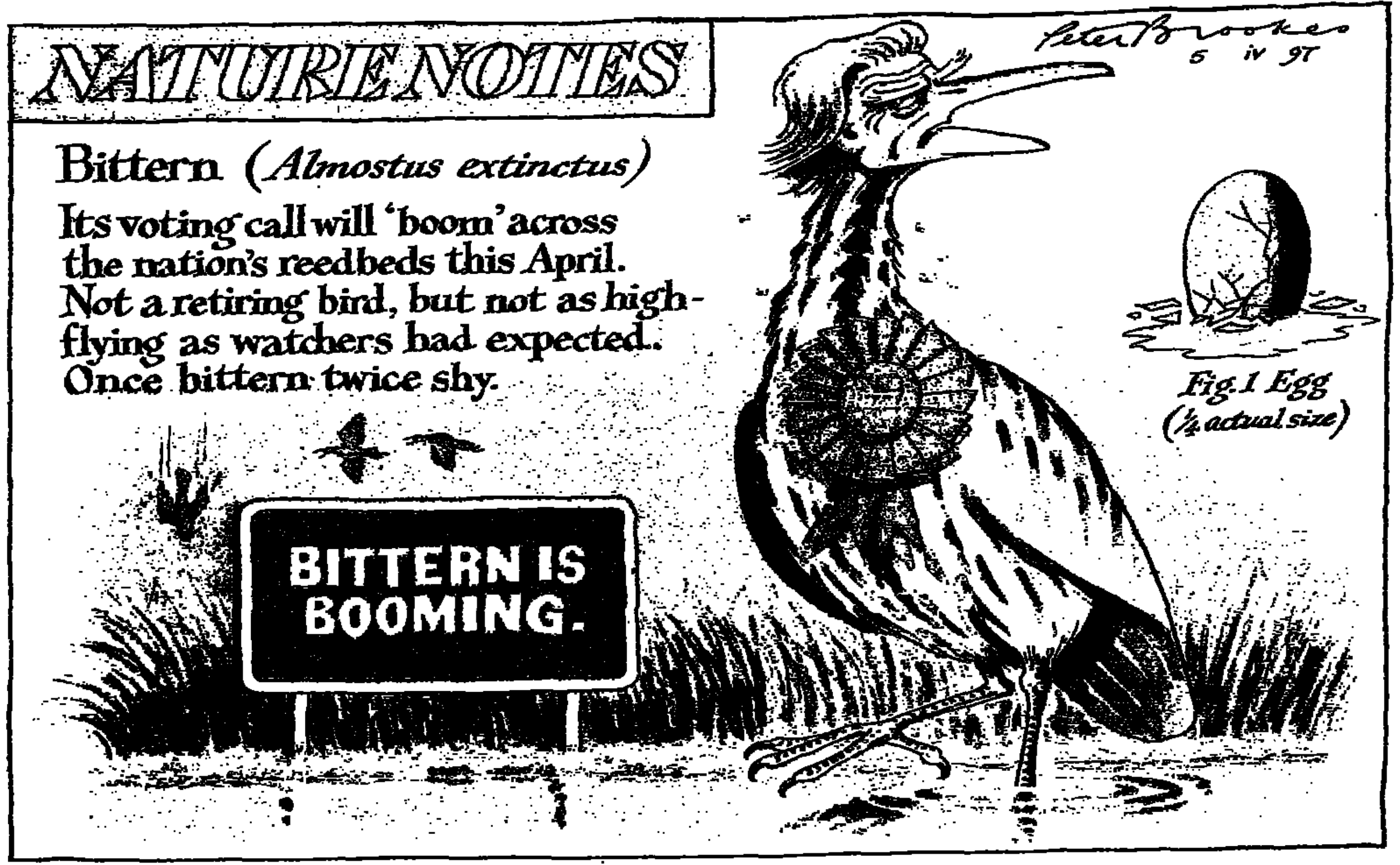
A prominent Miami businesswoman, hoping to influence US policy towards Cuba, solicited a £12,000 Democrat contribution from a drug smuggler .... **Page 17**

Cloning deal

Twenty countries signed the first international convention to control research into human genetic engineering and cloning .... **Page 18**

Moving up the evolutionary scale

■ Neanderthal Man could play sweet music, according to an analysis of the oldest known musical instrument, a flute made from the thigh bone of a bear. It was found in a cave in Slovenia, and dated to between 43,000 and 67,000 years ago — at least 10,000 years older than any other instrument .... **Page 1**


NATURE NOTES
Bittern (Almostus extinctus)
Its voting call will 'boom' across the nation's reedbeds this April. Not a retiring bird, but not as high-flying as watchers had expected. Once bittern twice shy.
BITTERN IS BOOMING.
Fig.1 Egg (½ actual size)
Peter Brookes 5 iv 97

OPINION

Lost in translation: When Tony Blair told the Scots that ultimate sovereignty would reside with Westminster and that, if a parish council could raise tax, so should a Scottish parliament, these were no slips of the tongue .... **Page 21**

Taleban: Afghanistan is disappearing into the obscurity of the 7th century .... **Page 21**

LETTERS

Italian task force; standards in public life; influence of *Masons; how readers earn* prizes; Catholic doctrines; hunting; Elgar .... **Page 21**

COLUMNS

Simon Jenkins: Elections have joined books, newspapers and broadcasters in the great drift down-market, in the "dumbing down" of Britain .... **Page 20**

Derwent May: Three-letter *words work far harder than* four-letter words — and sometimes as much by their absence as their presence. By their "ands" and their "buts" shall ye know them.. **Page 20**

OBITUARIES

Norman Carr*, conservationist;* **Jolie Gabor**, socialite; **Erik Nelson**, aviator **Page 23**

BUSINESS

Defensive: The French have barred a bid by GEC for Thomson CSF .... **Page 25**

Pay off: The former chief executive of the National & Provincial Building Society has been made redundant with a *£700,000 pay-off* .... **Page 25**

Shares: The DTI is understood to be considering an investigation into deals in *Maid, the online information* company .... **Page 25**

Markets: The FT-SE 100 rose 22 to 4236.6. Sterling rose *from 98.3 to 98.6* after a fall from $1.6415 to $1.6402 but rising to DM2.7490.. **Page 28**

SPORT

Tennis: Victory by Andrew Richardson brought Britain level in the Davis Cup match *against Zimbabwe*.... **Page 48**

Football: Middlesbrough, Coca-Cola Cup finalists against Leicester City, could end the season with two trophies .... **Page 48**

Cricket: Ireland and Scotland reached the semi-finals of the ICC Trophy to guarantee local opposition for England in the World Cup .... **Page 44**

CAR 97

The bespoke Bentley and a 35ft stretch mini.

ARTS

Tony awards: The good *news is, its arts policy is* not buried on page 24. The bad news is, it's buried on page 30, just behind details of Labour's "long-standing commitment to angling" .... **Page 19**

Play time: As demands grow for a National Children's Theatre, Simon Tait reports on our "forgotten audience" .... **Page 19**

Bearable Brahms: The Wigmore Hall marked the centenary of Brahms's death with a subdued and sombre concert .... **Page 19**

SECTIONS

MAGAZINE

Mr Bean: Hollywood is under invasion ....**Page 8**
Bottomley line: Bimbo or battleaxe ....**Page 16**
War artist at peace **28**

Weekend

Iron maidens: Networking at golf ...... **Pages 1, 2**

Property: France; Devon; Sussex ....**Pages 7-11**
***Home life:** Can parenting* be taught? .... **Page 13**

10 15

Trainers: How the top brands score ......**Page 6**
Nick Hornby: Facts behind *the passion* ....***Page 3***

dire

Museums: Are they becoming theme parks? **4**
Books: .... **Pages 9-14**
What's On: .... **Pages 15-22**
TV, radio guide: **23-51**

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,446

A £20 book token will be awarded to the senders of the first five correct solutions opened next Thursday. Entries should be addressed to: The Times, Saturday Crossword Competition, PO Box 486, Virginia Street, London E1 9DD. The names of the winners and the solution will be published next Saturday.

Name/Address ....

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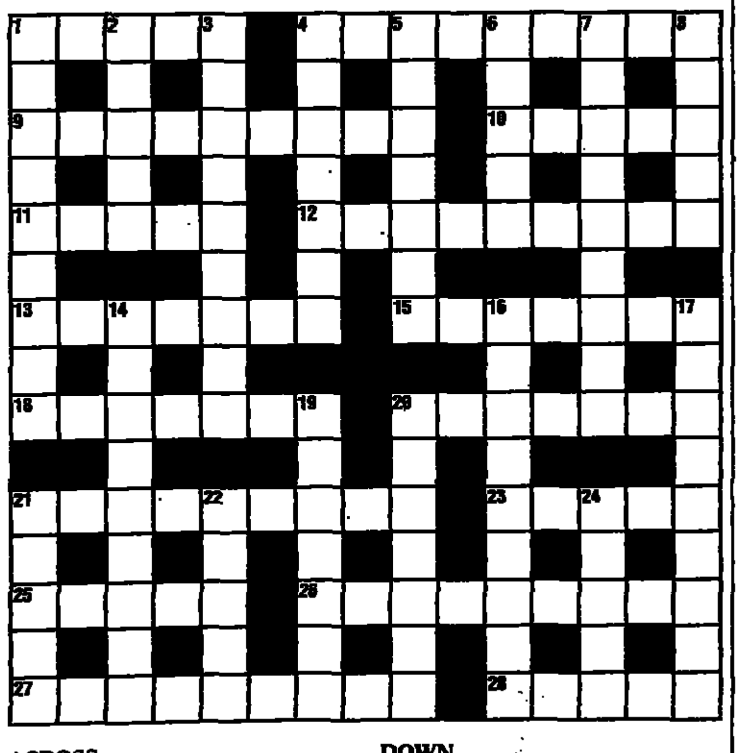

ACROSS
1 Notes made on staff (5).
4 It's wearable, and possibly throwable (6,3).
9 Pure and animated heroine (4-5).
10 Yank's spirit (5).
11 13 engineers backed judge (5).
12 Guns I will put in vessel (9).
13 Attribute of a writer (7).
15 National side in American game (7).
18 Encountered recurrent problem with plants in bad weather (7).
20 Snake's done in queen, when clasped (7).
21 An acorn — it can develop into a plant (9).
23 One must turn to part of Bible to find him (5).
25 Some carry out handiwork in early life (5).
26 Stop administering sodium to insect (9).
27 Support from below, bringing European articles forward (9).
28 Visitor supposed to be seen but not heard? On the contrary (5).

DOWN
1 Villain involved in arms etc. (9).
2 Put away — in other words, no longer available (5).
3 Fear to gamble after business dispute (9).
4 Group of soldiers ordered to hide equipment (7).
5 Fight involving welterweights of no importance (7).
6 Force out ace, moving right to left (5).
7 Sewing kit for home economist (9).
8 Drink tea, say? All right (5).
14 Be persuaded to visit (4,5).
16 Activity resulting from original job creation scheme (9).
17 Churchmen put in that special decoration on tomb (9).
19 Such a dancer swept Dorothy off her feet (7).
20 United Nations brought in to secure hot spot (7).
21 Animal — shy cat — losing mother (5).
22 Shudder at injuries inflicted on soldiers (5).
24 Harangue half the voters (5).

Solution to Puzzle No 20,440

C	H	A	F	E	R		C	L	E	A	V	E	R	S
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Solution to Puzzle No 20,445

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	L	A	D	Y	C	H	A	T	T	E	R	L	E	Y

LAST WEEK'S WINNERS: *J C Williams, Lowestoft, Suffolk; J Greatrex, Leeds; S R Leaning, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire; M H Bride, Cirencester, Gloucestershire; I Shuman, Wimborne, Dorset.*

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HOURS OF DARKNESS

TODAY

Sun rises: 6.27 am · Sun sets: 7 41 pm
Moon sets 5.16 pm · Moon rises 5.32 am

New moon April 7

London 7 41 pm to 6.25 am
Bristol 7.50 pm to 6.35 am
Edinburgh 7.59 pm to 6 31 am
Manchester 7.52 pm to 6.30 am
Penzance 8.00 pm to 6.48 am

TOMORROW

Sun rises: 6.25 am · Sun sets: 7.42 pm
Moon sets 6.37 pm · Moon rises 6.03 am

New moon tomorrow

London 7 42 pm to 6.23 am
Bristol 7.52 pm to 6 32 am
Edinburgh 8 01 pm to 6.28 am
Manchester 7 53 pm to 6.28 am
Penzance 8.02 pm to 6 46 am

HIGH TIDES

TODAY	AM	HT	PM	HT
London Bridge	00.30	6.8	13.09	7.1
Aberdeen	00.22	4.0	12.30	4.1
Avonmouth	06.12	12.7	18.43	13.0
Belfast	10.04	3.3	22.41	3.3
Cardiff	05.58	11.8	18.29	12.0
Devonport	04.39	5.2	17.16	5.2
Dover	10.11	6.4	22.35	6.6
Dublin (N Wall)	10.44	4.1	23.21	4.1
Falmouth	04.10	5.0	16.47	5.0
Greenock	11.45	3.3	-	-
Harwich	11.02	3.9	23.21	3.8
Holyhead	09.25	5.5	22.00	5.5
Hull (Albert D)	05.30	8.2	17.37	8.4
Ilfracombe	05.02	8.8	17.30	8.9
King's Lynn	05.38	6.2	17.42	6.5
Leith	01.32	5.3	13.47	5.3
Liverpool	10.21	9.2	22.52	9.3
Lowestoft	08.49	2.3	20.40	2.4
Margate	11.18	4.6	23.24	4.6
Milford Haven	05.15	6.6	17.45	6.7
Newquay	04.10	6.6	16.39	6.7
Oban	05.07	3.8	17.36	3.6
Penzance	03.38	5.3	16.08	5.3
Portland	05.38	1.7	18.17	1.8
Portsmouth	10.30	4.5	23.00	4.7
Shoreham	10.21	6.0	22.50	6.3
Southampton	09.53	4.4	22.22	4.6
Swansea	05.22	9.2	17.52	9.4
Tees	02.42	5.1	14.54	5.2
Walton-on-N	10.55	4.1	23.13	4.0

All times GMT. Hights in metres.

Yesterday: Highest day temp: Hove, East Sussex, 15C (59F); lowest day max: Aviemore, Highland, 3C (37F); highest rainfall: Stornoway, Outer Hebrides, 0.5in; highest sunshine: Clacton, Essex, 11.3hr.

NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.2% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1996

FORECAST

☐ **General:** Scotland and Northern Ireland will start with rain. By early *afternoon the rain over Northern* Ireland and southwest Scotland will become patchy, while in the north the rain will turn to wintry showers during the evening. Most places should be dry by midnight.

England and Wales will start dry but mostly cloudy, with perhaps a little sunshine in southernmost counties at first. Showery rain will spread across northern England, North Wales and parts of eastern England, but most southern areas will stay dry. Generally windy. Cool in North, warm in South.

☐ **London, SE England, Central S England, E Midlands, W Midlands, Channel Isles, SW England, S Wales:** bright early, then cloudy but remaining dry. Wind west, fresh, occasionally strong. Quite warm. Max 15C (59F)

☐ **E Anglia, E England:** early brightness then cloudy, perhaps a few slight *showers late in day. Wind west*, fresh or strong. Quite warm. Max 14C (57F)

☐ **N Wales, NW England, Lake District, Isle of Man, Central N England, NE England:** mainly cloudy with drizzle at times. Cool wind, westerly, fresh or strong. Max 13C (55F)

☐ **Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aberdeen, SW Scotland, Glasgow, Central Highlands, Moray Firth, Argyll, NW Scotland, N Ireland:** cloudy with outbreaks of rain. Cool wind, strong at times. Max 12C (54F)

☐ **NE Scotland, Orkney, Shetland:** rain clearing to wintry showers during the afternoon and evening. Wind mainly northeast, fresh or strong. Chilly. Max 7C (45F)

☐ **Outlook:** night frosts; mostly dry, sunny spells, a little rain in far north.

AROUND BRITAIN

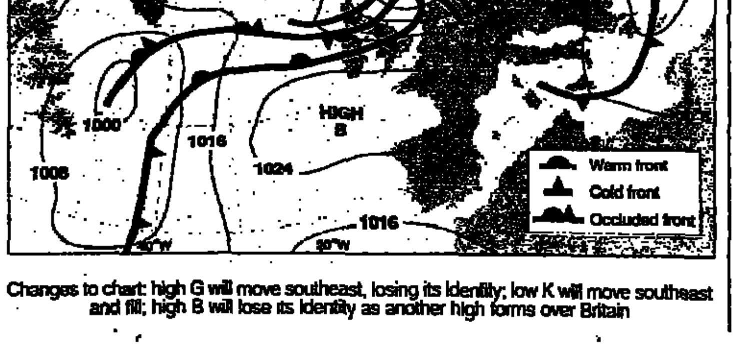
24 hrs to 5 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=drizzle; ds=dust storm; du=dull; f=fair; fg=fog; g=gale; h=hail; r=rain; sh=shower; sl=sleet; sn=snow; s=sun; t=thunder

	Sun hrs	Rain in	Max C	Max F			Sun hrs	Rain in	Max C	Max F	
Aberdeen	-	0.07	5	41	sn	Leuchars	0.6	0.03	6	43	r
Anglesey	1.8	0.01	11	52	d	Littlehmptn	10.2	-	12	54	s
Aspatria	3.0	0.02	7	45	r	London	9.8	-	13	55	s
Aviemore	0.4	0.08	3	37	sn	Lowestoft	9.4	0.03	11	52	s
Belfast	*0.9*	*0.04*	*11*	*52*	*d*	*Manchester*	*4.3*	*0.01*	*9*	*48*	*s*
Birmingham	4.6	0.01	10	50	c	Margate	X				
Bognor R	10.7	-	13	55	s	Minehead	X				
Bournem'th	7.9	-	13	55	s	Morecambe	4.2	0.03	8	46	r
Bristol	3.4	-	11	52	b	Newcastle	5.9	0.03	8	46	r
Buxton	4.9	-	7	45	s	Newquay	1.8	-	11	52	c
Cardiff	1.4	0.01	10	50	d	Norwich	7.1	0.01	11	52	s
Clacton	11.3	-	10	50	s	Oxford	4.7	-	12	54	b
Cleethorpes	X					Penzance	X	-	12	54	b
Colwyn Bay	X					Poole	6.5	-	15	59	s
Cromer	7.7	0.03	7	45	s	Prestatyn	X				
Dunbar	X					Ross-o-wye	3.6	-	13	55	b
Eastbourne	10.4	-	11	52	s	Ryde	10.0	-	12	54	s
Edinburgh	1.9	0.06	7	45	r	Salcombe	8.7	-	13	55	b
Eskdalemuir	3.4	0.17	5	41	sn	Sandown	8.7	-	13	55	s
Exmouth	4.1	-	13	55	b	Sauntn Snd	1.9	-	11	52	du
Falmouth	6.0	-	14	57	b	Scarboro'	7.2	0.01	8	46	d
Fishguard	0.8	0.01	11	52	d	Shanklin	9.4	-	12	54	s
Folkestone	10.5	-	12	54	s	Shrewsbury	X				
Glasgow	2.4	0.16	9	48	r	Skegness	6.4	-	11	52	s
Guernsey	9.5	-	13	55	s	Southend	X				
Hastings	10.6	-	12	54	s	Southport	2.3	0.01	9	48	sh
Hayling I.	9.6	-	12	54	s	Southsea	X	-	11	52	s
Herne Bay	9.2	-	11	52	s	Stornoway	2.2	0.50	9	48	r
Hove	4.0	-	15	59	b	Swanage	9.3	-	12	54	s
Hunstanton	X	-	10	50	du	Teignmouth	5.5	-	14	57	b
Ilfracombe	X					Tenby	2.8	0.01	11	52	c
Isle of Man	1.3	0.02	10	50	c	Tiree	1.6	0.18	10	50	r
Jersey	10.3	-	13	55	s	Torquay	7.3	-	15	59	s
Kinloss	*1.4*	*0.09*	*5*	*41*	*sn*	*Ventnor*	*9.9*	-	*13*	*55*	*s*
Leeds	5.5	0.01	10	50	s	West-s-mare	1.9	-	12	54	b
Lerwick	0.7	0.13	3	37	b	Weymouth	9.4	-	11	52	s

ABROAD

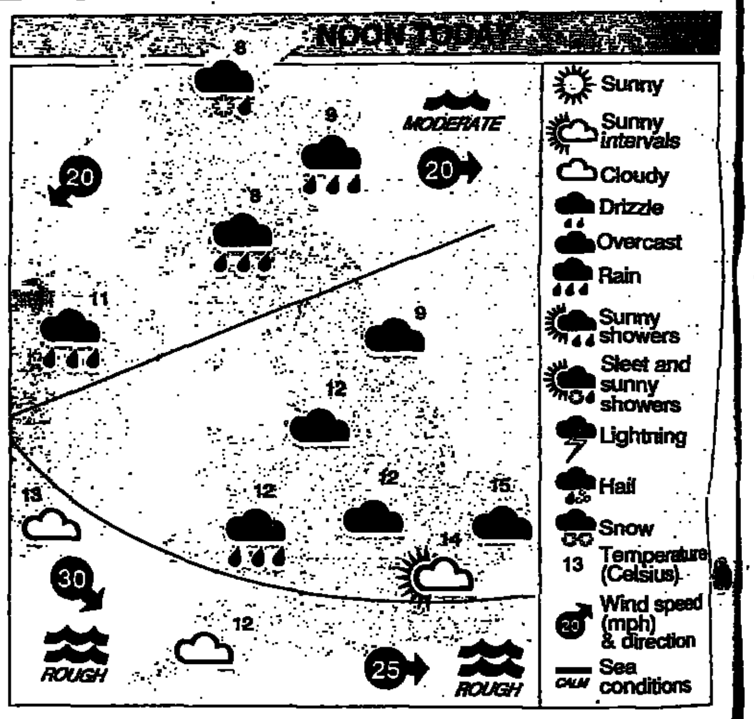
Ajaccio	17	63 s	Corfu	11	52 r	Malaga	19	66 s	S Fr'isco	18	64 s
Akrotiri	17	63 f	C'phagn	6	43 r	Malta	17	63 s	S Paulo	25	77 f
Alex'dria	21	70 s	Dublin	9	48 s	Melb'rne	19	66 c	Salzburg	15	59 f
Algiers	22	72 s	Dubrovnik	12	54 c	Mexico C	24	75 f	Santiago	25	77 s
Amst'dm	10	50 X	Faro	19	66 s	Miami	26	79 s	Seoul	17	63 c
Athens	16	61 s	Florence	18	54 s	Milan	22	72 s	Sing'por	32	90 f
B Aires	20	68 s	Frankfurt	17	63 f	Montreal	7	45 s	St'kholm	9	48 c
Bahrain	*30*	*86 s*	*Funchal*	*X*		*Moscow*	*10*	*50 f*	*Strasb'rg*	*19*	*66 f*
Bangkok	34	93 f	Geneva	19	66 s	Munich	16	61 f	Sydney	27	81 f
Barbados	28	82 c	Gibraltar	20	68 f	N Delhi	21	70 f	Tangier	22	72 s
Barcelona	19	66 s	Helsinki	4	39 r	N York	17	63 s	Tel Aviv	20	68 f
Beirut	18	64 f	Hong K	26	79 f	Nairobi	25	77 f	Tenerife	21	70 c
Belgrade	14	57 c	Innsbrck	12	54 s	Naples	17	63 s	Tokyo	12	54 r
Berlin	14	57 f	Istanbul	8	46 f	Nice	17	63 s	Toronto	X	
Bermuda	12	54 r	Jeddah	34	93 s	Oslo	8	46 f	Tunis	19	66 c
Biarritz	15	59 s	Jo'burg	19	66 f	Paris	13	55 c	Valencia	21	70 s
Borde'x	22	72 f	L Palmas	21	70 f	Peking	13	55 s	Vanc'ver	8	46 s
Brussels	11	52 f	Le Tquet	12	54 f	Perth	27	81 s	Venice	19	66 s
Budapest	19	66 s	Lisbon	19	66 s	Prague	17	63 s	Vienna	17	63 s
Cairo	22	72 s	Locarno	20	68 f	Reykjavik	-2	28 s	Warsaw	12	54 f
Cape Tn	23	73 s	Luxembg	13	55 f	Rhodes	14	57 f	Wash'ton	21	70 s
Ch'church	16	61 X	Luxor	29	84 s	Rio de J	26	79 f	Wel'ngton	15	59 X
Chicago	*17*	*63 f*	*Madrid*	*20*	*68 f*	*Riyadh*	*33*	*91 s*	*Zurich*	*17*	*63 s*
Cologne	12	54 c	Majorca	20	68 s	Rome	19	66 f			

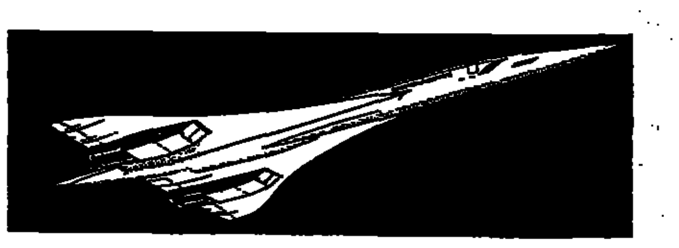
Temperatures at midday local time. X = not available



Changes to chart: high G will move southeast, losing its identity; low K will move southeast and fill; high B will lose its identity as another high forms over Britain

NOON TODAY





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Fly to Norway on 11 June • eight night Oriana Land of the Midnight Sun cruise to Bergen via the Fjords and Spitsbergen • Concorde supersonic return £1,999

Orient-Express to Southampton on 16 August • six night Oriana cruise to Tenerife via Praia da Rocha and Casablanca • Concorde supersonic to Heathrow £1,799

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Orient-Express to Southampton on 18 June • five night QE2 cruise to Barcelona via Lisbon and Tangier • city tour • Concorde supersonic to Heathrow from £1,599

Orient-Express to Southampton on 13 July • eleven night QE2 Land of the Midnight Sun cruise to Bergen via the Norwegian Fjords and Iceland • Concorde return £2,999

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SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

DTI may launch Maid share deal inquiry

Wagner: company is target

By Robert Miller

THE Department of Trade and Industry is understood to be considering an investigation into share deals in Maid, the online information company.

Since Maid made its stock market debut in 1994 the company's share price has been as low as 45p and as high as 354p. Yesterday Maid shares closed up 4p at 204p. The Trade and Industry Department is believed to have been passed the Maid file after an investigation by the Stock Exchange.

Under City rules the Stock Exchange's monitoring and surveillance unit automatically investigates any unusual share deals or price fluctuations. These rarely lead to any further action being taken.

If, however, market abuse is suspected the Stock Exchange passes the file to the Trade and Industry Department, which then decides whether to use its more wide-ranging powers to launch a formal investigation.

In February, Dan Wagner, 34, chief executive and founder of Maid, claimed that his company's share price had been forced down by sophisticated international short-selling.

Between October last year and the first week in February this year alone the company's share price went from 310p to 150p.

Mr Wagner said that he had made a statement at the time after ABN Amro Hoare Govett, Maid's broker, had noticed "a large majority of foreign share sales coming through companies based in Jersey, Monte Carlo and Lichtenstein".

It is believed that after Maid's share price fall and the company's statement the Stock Exchange began an investigation as it was bound to do. Last night the Stock Exchange declined to comment. The Trade and Industry Department said: "We neither confirm nor deny whether an investigation is being conducted into an individual or a company."

Mr Wagner told *The Times* yesterday: "We would very much hope that the proper authorities will investigate these events. We are trying to run a business and a successful one. But we have become the target for share manipulators."

He added: "These people are damaging small investors who believe in Maid by spreading rumours that are untrue so that they can line their own pockets. What they are doing is not only illegal but immoral as well. The practice should be stamped out."

WEEKEND MONEY

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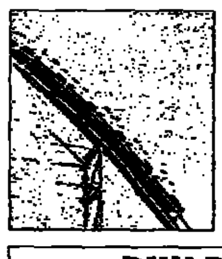

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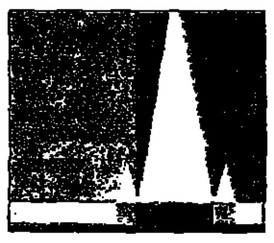


HOUSING MARKET

35
A grim reminder of the 1980s excesses

French no to bid by GEC for Thomson

By Adam Sage in Paris and Oliver August

THE French Government has snubbed a £1.2 billion takeover bid by GEC for Thomson-CSF, the defence electronics group that is to be privatised soon.

The French Finance Ministry said yesterday that it would refuse to consider the offer made last week by the British industrial group, claiming the sale of Thomson's defence arm to a foreign company would be contrary to the national security interest.

GEC said that the French decision was undermining European consolidation efforts in the defence sector in the face of a renewed onslaught by US rivals that had consolidated already.

Lord Prior, GEC chairman, said: "The fragmented structure of the European defence electronics industry will not sustain a strong competitive position in world markets in the next century. This can be achieved only through an integrated capability efficient in its operations and effective in the deployment of its resources."

French ministers insisted foreign groups were welcome, but only as subordinates. They emphasised President Chirac's determination to see a "national defence champion" emerge from the sell-off. The GEC rejection will be welcomed by the two French companies bidding for the 58 per cent Thomson stake, Alcatel Alsthom, the telecommunications company, Lagadère, the defence to media group.

Analysts said GEC's attempt to outbid Alcatel and Lagadère was a very long shot. But the dismissive nature of the Paris reponse is likely to fuel cross-Channel tensions. With President Chirac describing the privatisation as an essential part of European defence industry restructuring, many analysts expected Paris to consider, if not accept, GEC's proposal.

However, the GEC bid was seen by the Government as an embarrassment as well as a snub to GEC's French partner, Alcatel Alsthom.

The French Government said it wanted GEC to open discussions with Lagadère and Alcatel with a view to participating in their offers.

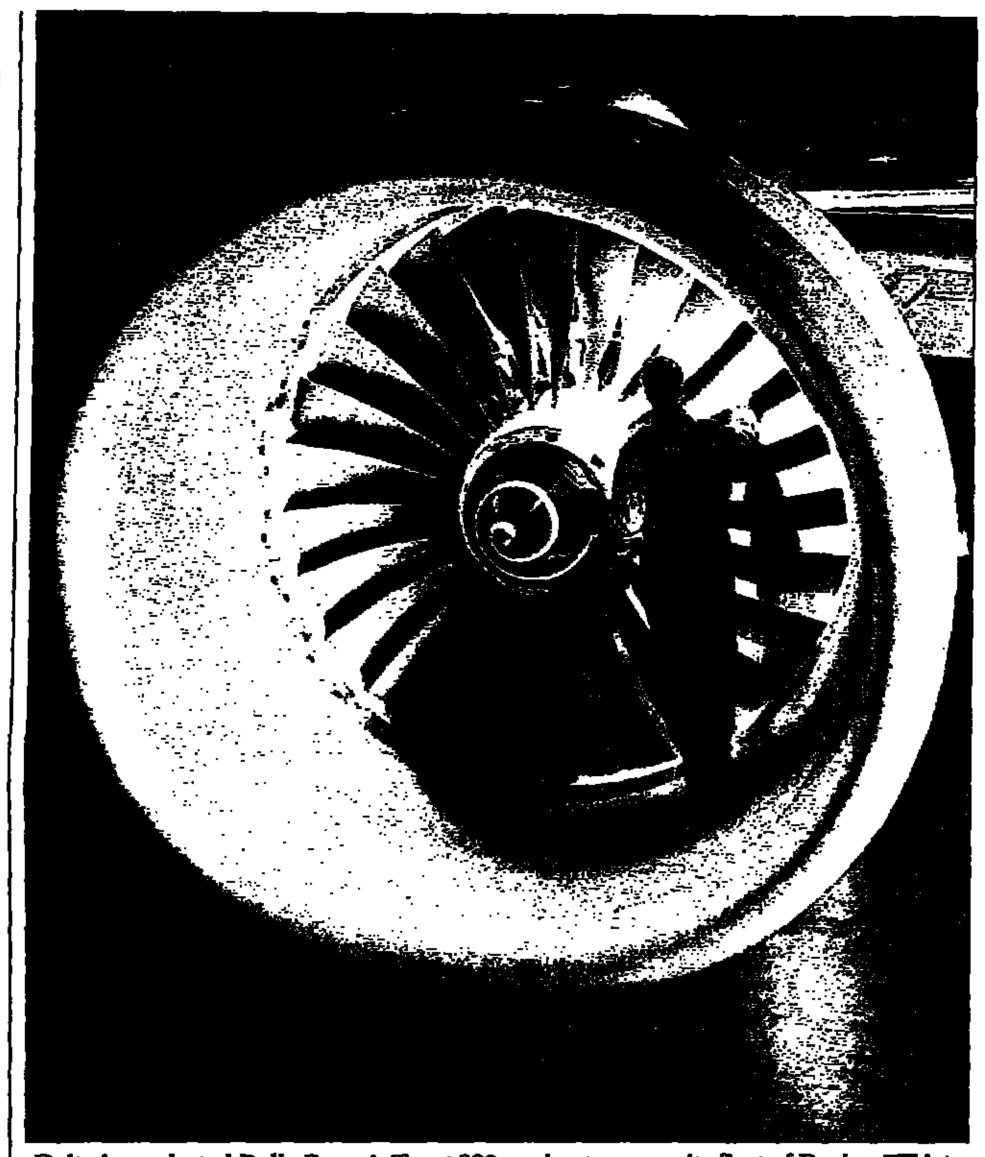
In Paris, analysts expressed concern that by adopting a stance that will be portrayed as intransigent, France could damage its chances of placing itself at the centre of European defence industry restructuring.

South Korea reacted angrily last year when the original privatisation procedure was stopped amid protests over a plan to sell Thomson's consumer electronics arm, Thomson Multimedia, to Daewoo.

In its second attempt the Government decided to split Thomson, hoping for a speedy and uncontroversial sale of the defence electronics branch.

The Finance Ministry confirmed that it would consider the bids by Alcatel and Lagadère. Alcatel has reinforced its chances by forging an alliance with Dassault, the defence group. Final offers are due by May 7, with the Finance Minsitry saying it wants to make a decision on Thomson-CSF by June.

Tempus, page 28



Delta has selected Rolls-Royce's Trent 800 engine to power its fleet of Boeing 777 jets

Delta deal opens up America to Rolls-Royce

By Oliver August

ROLLS-ROYCE has made a big breakthrough in the American market with Delta Airlines selecting the UK-made Trent 800 engine to power its fleet of Boeing 777 jets in a deal that could be worth £200 million.

Delta is the first US airline to select the Trent 800 engine for the 777 and the agreement could open up the booming American aviation market for Rolls-Royce.

A spokewoman said: "This could have a 20-year knock-on effect. The Trent 800 was chosen because it is a superior engine. It is particularly welcome as it comes from Delta, which flies more customers than any other airline."

Last month Delta announced an long-term agreement with Boeing for firm orders and options for more than 600 aircraft, including options to purchase ten 777s. Rolls-Royce said the number could rise.

Rolls-Royce currently supplies the engines for about 30 per cent of the existing 777s.

The Trent 892, the version of the 800 series ordered by Delta, has completed its test phase and is waiting for certification from the US government.

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET INDICES

FTSE 100	4238.6	(+22.0)
Yield	3.81%	
FTSE All share	2064.97	(+8.9)
Nikkei	17860.59	(-268.72)
New York:		
Dow Jones	6442.23	(-35.12)*
S&P Composite	748.31	(-2.01)*

US RATE

Federal Funds	5[illegible]%*	(5½%)
Long Bond	93[illegible]*	(94[illegible])
Yield	7.14%*	(7.07%)

LONDON MONEY

3-mth Interbank	6[illegible]%	(6[illegible]%)
Liffe long gilt future (Jun)	108[illegible]	(108[illegible])

STERLING

New York:		
$	1.6390*	(1.6449)
London:		
$	1.6403	(1.6413)
DM	2.7488	(2.7381)
FFr	9.2538	(9.2241)
SFr	2.3487	(2.3537)
Yen	203.62	(201.49)
£ Index	98.6	(98.3)

DOLLAR

London:		
DM	1.6795*	(1.6702)
FFr	5.6595*	(5.6245)
SFr	1.4425*	(1.4345)
Yen	124.24*	(122.61)
$ Index	104.3	(103.7)

Tokyo close Yen 123.57

NORTH SEA OIL

Brent 15-day (Jun)	$18.45	($18.45)

GOLD

London close	$347.45	($348.95)

* denotes midday trading price

Abbey pays N&P chief £700,000

By Caroline Merrell

THE former chief executive of the National & Provincial Building Society has been made redundant from the Abbey National with a £700,000 pay-off.

Alastair Lyons, who was chief executive of N&P when it was taken over by the Abbey last year, is to become chief executive of another financial services company. His appointment will be announced this month.

Mr Lyons's pay-off represents more than two-and-half times his annual salary of £250,000. He had been with the society for six years.

Mr Lyons said: "I have always made it clear that I wanted to be chief executive of another company, having been chief executive of the N&P. I wanted to make sure that the N&P was fully integrated with the Abbey before making my move."

Mr Lyons said the post involved moving from Yorkshire.

Halifax targets savers with loyalty package

By Caroline Merrell

HALIFAX Building Society has fired the first shots in a savings war triggered by the stock market flotation of four of the UK's biggest building societies.

The society has launched a loyalty package to secure the custom of its seven million savers that includes discounts on personal loans, special rates for existing mortgage customers moving home, holiday discounts and free financial advice.

Savers have effectively been locked in to the society since it announced its flotation at the end of 1994. They risked losing their share entitlement, worth on average £1,300, if they moved their savings elsewhere.

When the flotation was announced, the Halifax was paying interest at a rate of 4.5 per cent on £5,000 in its instant access account, and 4.65 per cent on a similar amount in its 90-day account. The Halifax's instant access Liquid Gold account now pays 2.95 per cent interest, while its 90-day Solid Gold account pays 3.25 per cent on a £5,000 investment.

Higher rates are available elsewhere. The Portman pays interest of 4.5 per cent, while the Bradford & Bingley pays 4.8 per cent and Direct Line 4.5 per cent on instant access savings. A Portman saver gets 52 per cent more interest than one with the Halifax.

The Halifax says that its savers have been free to move all but £100 of their savings since February 24 and claims that there has not yet been any significant outflow of funds.

All societies are waiting to see what happens when the Alliance & Leicester makes its stock market debut on April 21.

Weekend Money, page 34

Eleven quit Capital Corp HQ

By Keith Rodgers

ELEVEN head office staff have departed *en masse* from Capital Corporation, the casino operator fighting a £191 million takeover bid from London Clubs International, raising questions about the company's financial and management controls.

The departures, said to be linked to a dispute over bonus payments, leave a large hole in a department responsible for finance, purchasing, security, and general administration. The company, which has been without a full-time financial director for 18 months, employs just 30 people at head office.

The walkout throws the spotlight back on to Capital's internal controls, which Garry Nesbitt, the chairman, acknowledged were "unsatisfactory" in the 1996 interim report. Last year, the company called in independent consultants in an attempt to strengthen its gaming and financial controls. It has since indicated that the controls have been tightened up.

Although the 11 members of staff only left on Tuesday, the company insisted "they have since been replaced under our existing heads of department." It refused to comment on whether the replacements were temporary. A spokesman added: "This has had no impact on our day-to-day operations and it's very much business as usual."

Capital, which runs Crockfords, one of the oldest private gaming clubs, and the Colony Club, has rejected the London Clubs offer as "derisory". Capital blamed a drop in pre-tax profits in 1996 from £13.1 million to £9.2 million in part on one-off costs resulting from consultancy reviews. The figures were also hit by low levels of high roller activity in the final quarter and exceptional costs from the temporary closure of one of its two casinos.

Yesterday, Mercury Asset Management, a major investor in both companies, bought 165,000 shares at 195p in Capital, taking its stake to 17.5 per cent. It sold 22,500 shares in London Clubs at 410p. London Clubs, whose shares closed at 408p, is offering 47 shares for every 100 in Capital, valuing each share at 191p. Capital shares closed at 200p.

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TT09

Virtual office becomes a reality for BA

The airline has gone for open space at its new £200 million London headquarters, says **Jon Ashworth**

BRITISH AIRWAYS has found a novel way of cutting back on those office expenses — do away with the office.

The airline's new £200 million headquarters at Heathrow will have vast amounts of open space and little else. Bob Ayling, BA's cost-conscious chief executive, has decided to do without a desk — all part of a continuing drive to improve efficiency.

Mr Ayling is seeking to strip £1 billion in costs out of BA in an endeavour to ensure that Britain's flag-carrier remains competitive. His efforts have prompted speculation that BA is degenerating into a "virtual airline", with the actual flying franchised out elsewhere. However, Mr Ayling has consistently denied having any such intention.

The prospect of a "virtual office" will make perfect sense to BA's long-suffering employees. The complex at Harmondsworth, close to the M4, consists of six horseshoe-shaped buildings linked by a central atrium. Staff will be treated to "hot-desking" and "hoteling" — reserving space at desks in advance.

The idea is to break down bureaucracy and improve communication among BA's 2,500 head office staff. Mr Ayling is giving up his desk in favour of a simple table. Glass will predominate. A BA spokesman said: "We are seeking to bring about a change in culture. This is the sort of workplace we want for the future." The offices are set in a 240-acre public park built on a former waste site.

BA is not alone in embracing a radical new approach. Andersen Consulting in Paris has "lagoons" — outward facing groups working together. Staff are given "breakout space" in which to socialise. They have their own trolleys, which are wheeled to where they are working on a particular day. Employees elsewhere indulge in "romping" — talking, gathering, and interacting.

The first occupants move into BA's new building just before Christmas.

ICA urged to close gap in the rules

By Jon Ashworth

ACCOUNTANCY regulators are facing renewed calls to widen the scope of compensation payable to clients of firms that go bust.

The various accountancy institutes run compensation schemes under the Financial Services Act (1986) but will only pay up in highly specific circumstances.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICA) is understood to have paid out in only 14 cases in the past five years. Compensation is currently capped at £50,000 per case.

Clients are typically covered by professional indemnity insurance (PII) — a prerequisite of ICA membership — but *policies will not pay out in* cases of fraud.

The loophole has been highlighted by the case of a widow *who invested £260,000 with a* chartered accountant who was subsequently jailed for fraud. Sarla Patel, of Milton Keynes, *entrusted her life savings to* Vincent Mascarenhas, based in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, who was last month sentenced to four years in prison at Luton Crown Court.

Illegal deposit-taking — as opposed to investment business — is not covered by the ICA compensation scheme. Kirsten Rimmer of Hilliers, the Bedfordshire law firm acting for Mrs Patel, has urged the ICA to close an obvious gap in the rules.

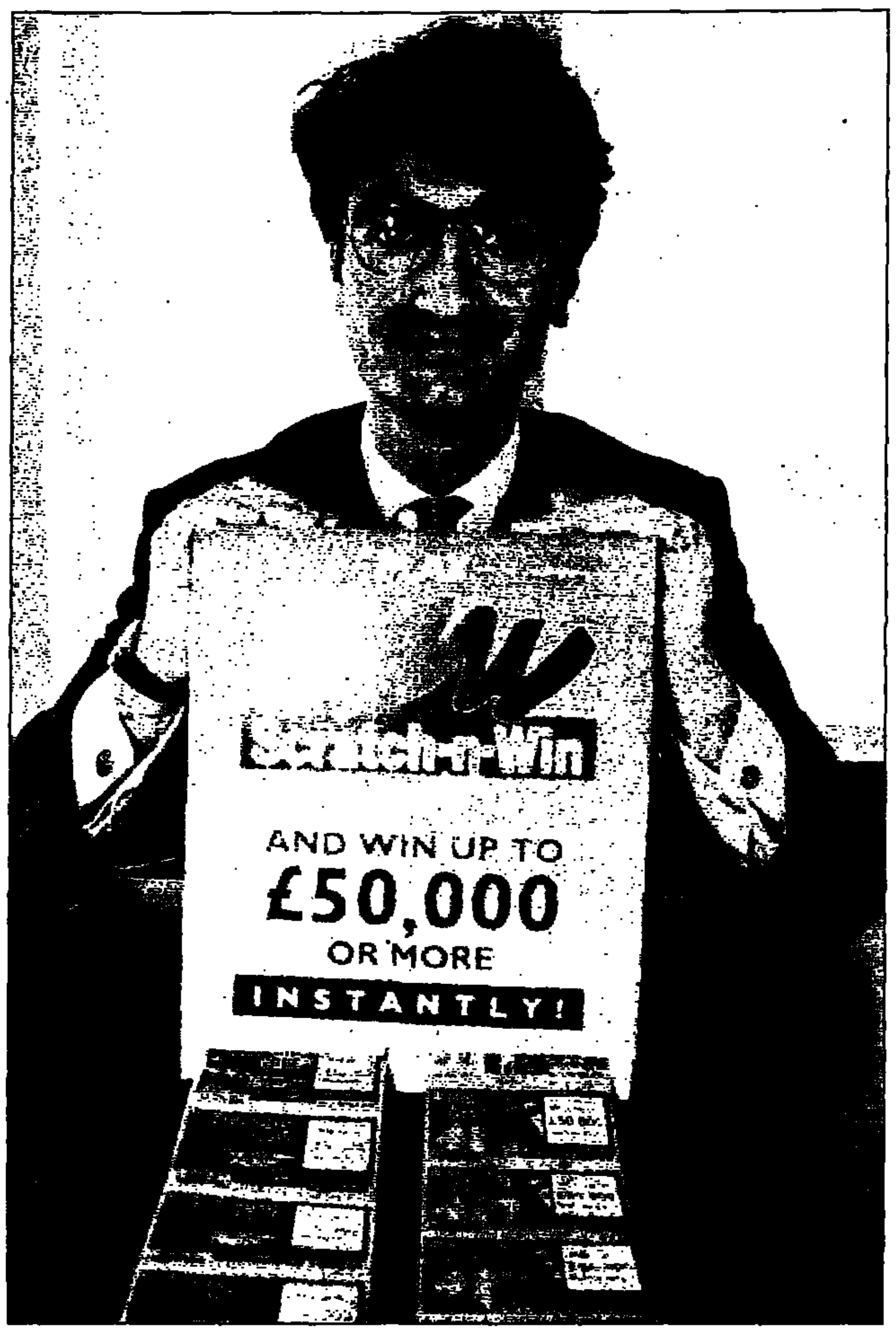
Mrs Rimmer said: "If people go to a chartered accountant, they do believe that they're not going to have any problems if something goes wrong."

Such incidents, while comparatively rare, are an embarrassment for the ICA, which in 1995 mounted a high-profile advertising campaign using the slogan: "It's easier to sleep with a chartered accountant." More than 50,000 ICA members have *direct dealing* with clients. Officials concede privately that the ICA compensation scheme needs to be looked at, but are concerned about attracting a flood of opportunistic claims.

Clients who suffer loss are *obliged to pursue all possible* avenues before the ICA will even consider their claim. They must first sue the accountant. *If that fails, PII cover* will usually kick in. If not, the ICA will consider claims — but only in the case of *investment business. If fraud is* involved, clients are left with nowhere to turn.

British Gas seeks to cut 800 jobs

British Gas began moves to seek up to 800 volunteers for redundancy among service engineers, blaming competitive pressures and new technology for the planned cutback. The services arm of the company sent letters to its 6,000 engineers, saying there was not enough work for them all. British Gas Services said the letters were the first stage of a consultation process aimed at attracting up to 800 volunteers for redundancy. The GMB general union said the redundancies were "unjustified" and that it had not ruled out industrial action over the planned job losses. *It is seeking urgent talks* with the company.



Lord Mancroft, who sold Scratch-n-Win, is developing video lottery machines

Mancroft backed by Crown Leisure

By Jon Ashworth

LORD MANCROFT, the Tory peer, has won strong financial backing for his plans to introduce video lottery machines in pubs and clubs across the UK.

Crown Leisure, which makes coin-operated amusement machines, *has paid an* undisclosed sum for a 50 per cent stake in Lord Mancroft's company, Inter Lotto (UK). *The first in a raft of games* — each of which will benefit British charities — is due to be launched in the autumn.

Lord Mancroft's earlier venture, Scratch-n-Win, was sold to Littlewoods in December. Sales of scratchcards, including Poppy Day cards for the Royal British Legion, raised about £5 million for charity. Lord Mancroft has been cleared to proceed by the Gaming Board, and is negotiating with suppliers.

Pubs, clubs, airport lounges, shopping malls, fast-food outlets and leisure centres are all being targeted for the new games. They are likely to include numbers games and daily lotteries, in addition to Keno, a form of electronic bingo popular in America.

Not everyone is happy with the idea of gambling in pubs. Lord Mancroft said that games would be carefully monitored: "We're a responsible company." About 20 per cent of the money raised will go to charity.

Video lottery games could feature frequent draws and jackpots of up to £100,000. The business could develop into a £500 million-a-year industry, providing potentially huge returns for investors.

Rubython ends link with paper

By Jason Nissé

TOM RUBYTHON, founder of *Sunday Business*, is finally to end his connection with the *ailing newspaper by selling* the lease of its London office to an investor group led by Luke Johnson.

The price was *not disclosed*, but any money that Mr Rubython realises from the deal is expected to be claimed by *creditors who say he owes them* £70,000. Mr Rubython last year entered an Individual's Voluntary Arrangement to *avoid bankruptcy. Mr* Johnson said he expected Mr Rubython to be "out by Monday".

In spite of giving up the *editorship in November*, Mr Rubython has remained an editorial consultant. However, he has said that he wants to relaunch *Business Age, the monthly* title that brought him to prominence, in league with Anil Bhoyrul, his former business *partner and his successor as* editor of *Sunday Business*. Mr Bhoyrul left it in Feburary.

The lease on the West End *office, at 3 Cavendish Square*, runs for six years, and has a rent-free period due to end next month. Mr Johnson said *he thought the building was* not particularly attractive to tenants, but that it would cause a lot of disruption for *Sunday Business to move out.*

Mr Johnson denied that he is about to sell his 20 per cent stake in the paper, which he *bought for £330,000, but said* he had left the board of the company that owns the title.

BUSINESS ROUNDUP

US jobless at lowest level for five months

AMERICA's unemployment rate fell for the second consecutive month, *to 5.2 per cent in March*, in another sign of brisk economic growth that has rattled financial markets wary of inflation. It was the lowest seasonally adjusted rate in five months, the Labour Department said yesterday, *as moderate* job growth was boosted by gains in the computer industry and at retail and financial businesses. The rate was 5.3 per cent in February and 5.4 per cent in January.

Many economists believe the US unemployment rate could slip below 5 per cent later this year for the first time in a quarter of a century. Hourly wages rose sharply. The Labour Department said average hourly earnings of non-farm, non-supervisory workers rose 0.4 per cent in March. Year on year, average wages are up 4 per cent. Robert G. Dederick, an economist at Northern Trust in Chicago, said: "The odds are pointing to (another) Fed tightening in May."

Queensborough payout

QUEENSBOROUGH HOLDINGS, the leisure company, yesterday announced *it would pay its first dividend as it* moved into the black. The company reported full-year pretax profits of £3.6 million (£1 million loss). Earnings were 2.55p a share (3.8p loss). There was a fivefold increase in turnover to *£21.4 million. Queensborough is to invest* £2.4 million in existing businesses this year. The final dividend of 0.3p is payable on June 30.

Littlewoods faces lawsuit

LITTLEWOODS faces court action from Tommy Hilfiger, the *US clothing group*, which alleges that Littlewoods Warehouses has been selling merchandise that infringes its trademarks. It is seeking an injunction and damages. Littlewoods said its Home Shopping division "maintains a policy of selling branded products that to the best of our knowledge are original products. Littlewoods would not knowingly sell any counterfeit merchandise. The *complaint* is being investigated."

AG Holdings buys rivals

AG HOLDINGS, the manufacturer of cable reels, has continued its growth through acquisition with the purchase of three smaller rivals in Europe. The company has bought SOTAC and SEPRO in France and a company that also trades under the name of SEPRO in Belgium for a total of Fr13.5 million. All the companies manufacture wooden cable reels. The acquisitions follow a one-for-six issue by AG Holdings in November that raised £3.8 million.

Border chain cash call

BREAK FOR THE BORDER, the restaurant and live music venue operator, intends to raise £3 million through a one-for-four rights issue of up to 6.6 million shares at 51p each. The company, which floated in 1993 and has since suffered patchy trading in some of its London venues, will spend about £1.3 million on expanding its Wild West style restaurants throughout Britain. The remaining £1.7 million will go towards reducing the company's debt.

Ocean rises to £63m

JOHN ALLAN, chief executive of Ocean Group, the freight handling and distribution company, received a £95,000 performance bonus last year, *lifting his total pay to* £401,000, up from £373,000 in 1995. The total amount paid to the executive directors rose nearly 25 per cent to £1.25 million. Ocean last year increased its underlying pre-tax profits 16.2 per cent to £63 million. The company's *shares* have risen from 372p last year to the current level of 522½p.

Dividend marks growth

CALEDONIA INVESTMENT yesterday declared a supplementary dividend of 30p to mark growth in shareholders' *funds. The payment will be made to shareholders who* bought stock by the close of business on Thursday. A second interim dividend of 12.8p has also been declared, replacing the final dividend. This will make the total dividend 19p (18p), *for the year ended March 31.* Both the supplementary dividend and second interim dividend will be paid on May 1.

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Wrong type of oil find for Borneo

By Carl Mortished

SHARES in British Borneo Petroleum Syndicate plunged 10 per cent yesterday after the oil exploration group reported an unsuccessful well test in the Gulf of Mexico. The well, located in Green Canyon block 37, produced hydrocarbons, but samples tested by the company showed that it was the wrong kind of oil and had no commercial value.

Bill Colvin, finance director, described the oil as "a bit like thick treacle" and admitted that the company was disappointed with the outcome. "A few weeks ago we thought we had *something* worth about £3 per share."

The well test recovered samples of 8.6 degrees API, but only three miles to the North, wells had produced good quality oil measuring 20-30 degrees API. Alan Gaynor, Borneo's chief executive, said: "We believe the result of this well is very much anomalous for this region of the Gulf of Mexico." He said the company would be conducting a thorough review of additional drilling opportunities with its partners. The Green Canyon well was funded by Borneo's partner, Consolidated Natural Gas.

Shares in Borneo have soared over the past year, rising from £5 to almost £16 because of the successful purchase of oil discoveries in the deep water *of the Gulf of* Mexico, an oil province that is expected will soon overtake the North Sea.

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TOURIST RATES

	Bank Buys	Bank Sells
Australia $	2.20	2.04
Austria Sch	20.23	18.73
Belgium Fr	59.59	55.09
Canada $	2.395	2.225
Cyprus Cyp£	0.855	0.795
Denmark Kr	11.00	10.20
Finland Mkk	8.73	8.05
France Fr	9.67	8.97
Germany Dm	2.90	2.68
Greece Dr	448	422
Hong Kong $	13.43	12.33
Iceland	120	100
Ireland Pt	1.09	1.01
Israel Shk	5.79	5.14
Italy Lira	2895	2685
Japan Yen	216.50	200.50
Malta	0.653	0.598
Netherlds Gld	3.248	2.998
New Zealand $	2.51	2.29
Norway Kr	11.64	10.84
Portugal Esc	287.50	267.50
S Africa Rd	7.83	7.03
Spain Pta	242.50	225.50
Sweden Kr	13.20	12.20
Switzerland Fr	2.48	2.30
Turkey Lira	217122	203122
USA $	1.738	1.608

Rates for small denomination bank notes only as supplied by Barclays Bank PLC. Different rates apply to traveller's cheques. Rates as at close of trading yesterday.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

"The stock-market falls are enough for some strategists to start calling the end. "The party is over," says Mark Howdle, head of European equity strategy at the stockbroker UBS. "We have fallen into a recognisable syndrome . . ."

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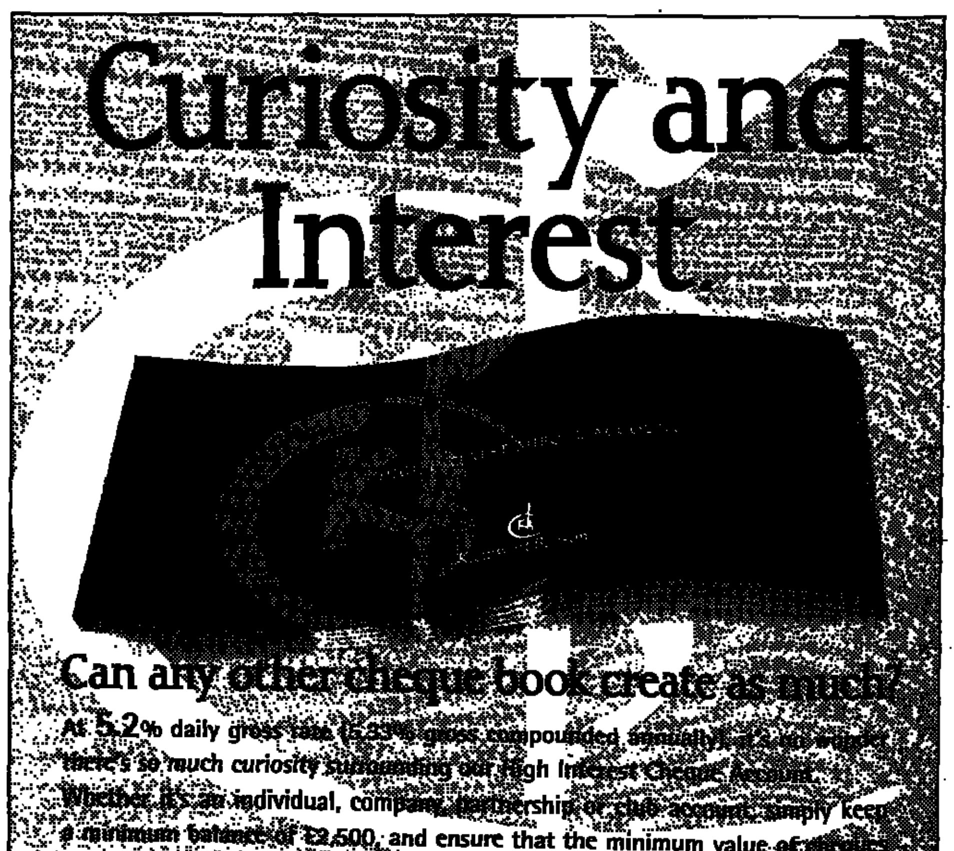

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A WORKING WEEK FOR: JERRY TAYLOR

Hanging on for a transatlantic connection

Eric Reguly finds that the chief executive of MCI is hungry to lead the street fighter of US telecoms into its £12bn merger with BT

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IT IS hard to imagine two executives as different as Sir Peter Bonfield and Jerry Taylor. Bonfield, knighted, cosmopolitan and impeccably dressed, is the chief executive of British Telecom, a company that is still struggling to shake off its monopolistic heritage. Taylor — squat, refreshingly unpolished, a US Air Force veteran and friend of Mike Milken, the notorious junk-bond king — is chief executive of MCI, the street fighter of the US phone industry that has bloodied AT&T's nose.

They are a potential culture clash in the making. Bonfield and Taylor have been thrust together to run Concert, the company to be formed later this year by BT's £12 billion takeover of MCI, America's second-largest long-distance carrier. Bonfield will be chief executive of the global powerhouse; Taylor will take the president and chief operating officer titles.

There is no question about who will be in charge. "Peter's the boss," Taylor says without hesitation. But Bonfield will have to tread lightly. Executives loyal to Taylor will occupy many of the top positions at Concert and he will have MCI's interests close to heart. It has been his employer for almost three decades.

> ‘We were a law office with an antenna on the roof’

Taylor, futhermore, doesn't really need the job. BT's takeover of MCI will make him far richer than he already is. What Taylor spends on a single fill-up for *Odin*, his 50-foot sportfisher yacht, would buy Bonfield a year's worth of designer suits. Taylor is to receive some $44 million for his MCI shares and options. His annual salary at Concert will be $700,000.

Telecoms executives and analysts don't think melding BT and MCI will be easy. But they don't expect the cultural differences to wreck the union. BT, they note, is hardly leaping into the fray. It has owned 20 per cent of MCI since 1994 and spent a lot of time getting to know its people, products and strategy; "Friends & Family", BT's successful discount package, was an MCI invention.

While Bonfield and Taylor could have been bred on different planets, it is also wrong to assume that BT and MCI are miles apart culturally. BT is competing in the world's most liberal telecoms market and has learnt to move quickly. John Tysoe, an analyst at Société Strauss Turnbull Securities, said BT was positively nimble in comparison to its old self. "BT, 13 years after privatisation, has moved a helluva long way from the regulated utility it once was."

Taylor agrees: "Peter Bonfield is more aggressive than many MCI people."

Taylor, 55, joined MCI, then known as Microwave Communications Inc, in 1969. He was its sixth employee. He was born in a small frozen town in Michigan. His father was an inventor who specialised in chemicals and developed the substance used to kill the lampreys that wiped out the salmon stocks in the Great Lakes.

Like many young men of his era, the armed forces provided his escape route. He became a communications expert in the US Air Force, had a posting in Okinawa, Japan, studied physics at San Francisco State University and ended up teaching there. When the time came to find a paying career, he took a gamble on MCI. At the time, MCI had more to do with litigation than telecommunications. Taylor said: "We were a law office with an antenna on the roof."

Indeed, mighty American Telephone & Telegraph, through its regional Bell companies, had a hammerlock on the domestic phone services. But the monopoly was always under attack. In the 1960s, regulatory changes allowed companies such as MCI to build networks in an effort to break into the long-distance market. It wasn't easy.

The Bell companies were not about to let a business they had owned since the turn of the century slide away and, in that great American tradition, they defended their turf in the courts. "We had a lot of lawsuits," Taylor remembers. "Once in Texas, the Bell company disconnected our business on the grounds that our service was not authorised — not authorised by them, that is." Although MCI scored a string of court victories, it was never confident about its future in the early years. Every business customer — it had no residential business at the time — was hard won and virtually every spare dollar went to finance lawsuits. The company, which raised $30 million in its 1972 flotation, had a negative net worth throughout the 1970s.

Taylor nonetheless was having the time of his life. In his first few years at MCI, he wrote the regulatory applications for operating licences, then switched to the sales side. MCI was enjoying its underdog status and captured the imagination of the upstart companies which loved to hate AT&T and the Bell companies. "The Government needed a catalyst for change," Taylor said. "We were successful in that sense. MCI galvanised opinion against AT&T. It was great to have them as an enemy." (An anti-trust suit filed by the Justice Department in the mid-1970s succeeded in breaking AT&T into a long-distance company and seven regional "Baby Bells" in 1984.) By the early 1980s, MCI no longer feared it would go out of business. It expanded its networks, developed its brand image and recruited its first residential customers. But it was still a bit player.

One man and one financial instrument would catapult MCI into the big league. In the early 1980s MCI was introduced to Michael Milken, of Drexel Burnham Lambert, the investment firm that was to become the most profitable player on Wall Street through the judicious use of junk bonds, high-yield corporate bonds that could turn a corporate mouse into a tiger. Milken used them to transform American industry and he did the same for MCI. He raised $2.7 billion for the company in the mid-1980s, giving it the financial might to challenge AT&T's dominance in international telecoms. "We certainly would not have got that kind of capital without him," Taylor said.

Milken's party ended in 1990 when he pleaded guilty to violating securities laws to settle the Justice Department's racketeering case. Milken went to prison, but the fallen hero was not forgotten by Taylor and Bert Roberts, MCI's chairman. Taylor says he has been an adviser to MCI from time to time.

MCI continued to grow in the early 1990s, becoming a well-known consumer name through relentless advertising. The company made a $1 billion investment in The News Corporation in 1995. News Corp is the parent company of *The Times*. Concert will inherit this investment when the BT-MCI merger receives regulatory approval, expected in the autumn.

Since then a fresh round of regulatory changes has presented it with another opportunity — one so big it could make or break MCI's fortunes. In early 1996, Congress passed the Telecommunications Act, the most radical and sweeping piece of telecoms legislation since the dismantling of AT&T.

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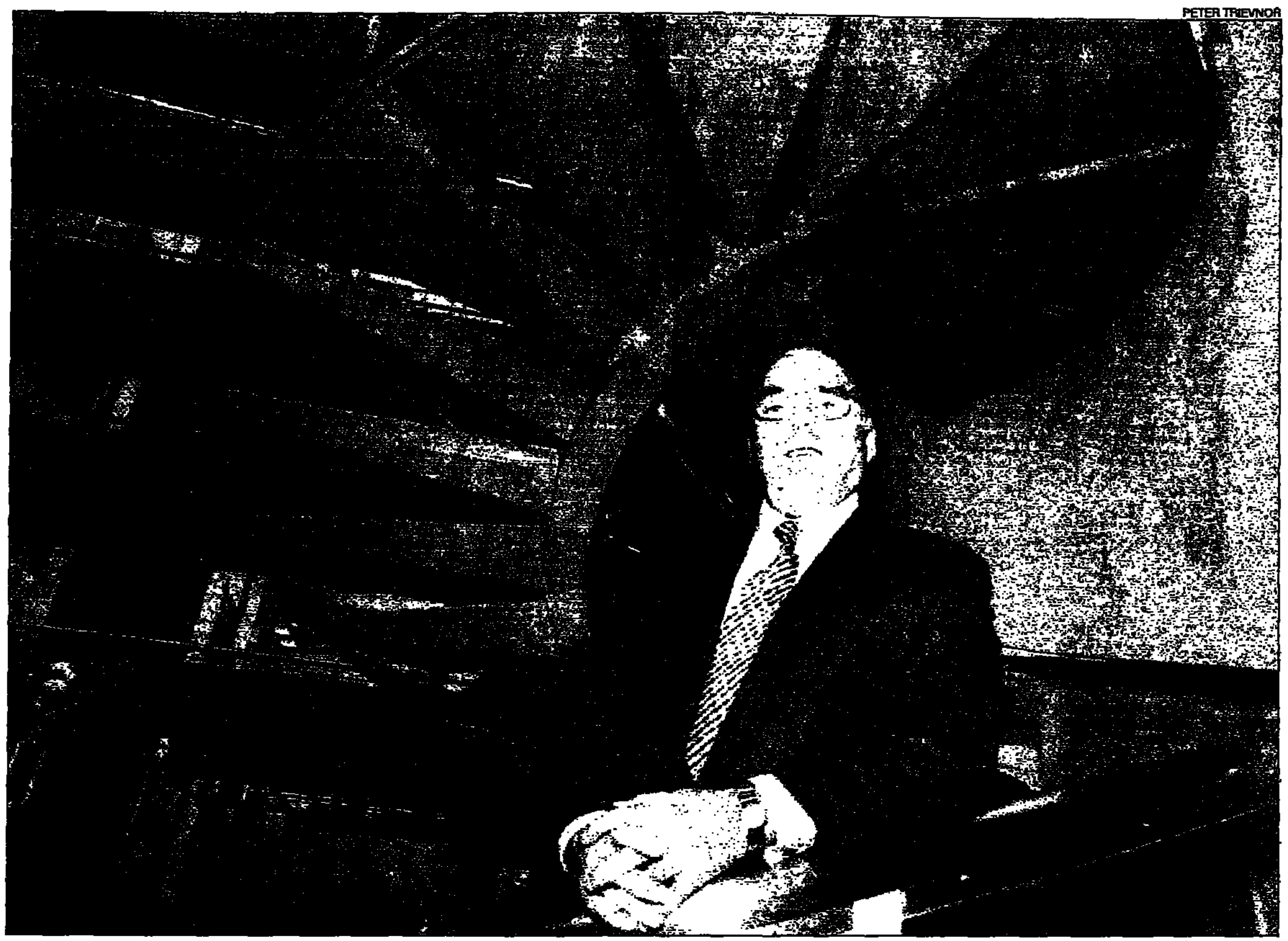
The Act is designed to eliminate the industry's remaining trade barriers, allowing the long-distance carriers, the regional and local phone companies and the cable companies to compete in each other's markets. Before its passage, MCI, AT&T and Sprint, the three main long-distance operators, could not provide local phone calls. The Act was supposed to trigger a free-for-all. The reality is that developing new networks, prising open the local monopolies that still exist, negotiating interconnection fees with those companies and taking the stubborn ones to court will take years and billions of dollars. MCI, in effect, faces a repeat of the war that it fought in the Sixties and Seventies. And this time, it could not do it alone.

Enter BT. Taylor said BT would not actually finance MCI's push into local markets. But having BT as its owner will remove the pressure on MCI to report ever-increasing earnings. It can, in other words, invest as little or as much as it wants without the irritation of public shareholders breathing down its neck.

Taylor could easily call it a day and devote his time to marlin fishing and scuba diving, his two favourite activities. As tempting as it is, he is not ready. He has agreed a three-year contract with Concert and said he was looking forward to transforming it, through MCI, into a serious player in the local market. "I don't see this as the end of my career," he said. "I see it as a huge opportunity to carry on, building up an international partnership with BT and getting into local markets in America. This is exciting. Who would not want to be part of it? I love action."

The City is looking forward to Concert's launch and thinks it has a good chance of achieving its goals if BT and MCI can merge their operations and cultures without too many snags. Tysoe, of Strauss Turnbull, said: "There's such a large market to go after worldwide. These guys deserve to get their butts kicked if they spend their time squabbling with each other instead."



PETER TREVNOR

Jerry Taylor is looking forward to trying to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Telecommunications Act, which Congress passed last year

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HIDDEN ASSETS

Opulent reminder of when banks projected their might

Cashing a cheque on the way to the Ritz Hotel can be an exotic experience. A clutch of bank buildings in Piccadilly built by the architect of the Dorchester, William Curtis Green (1875-1960), offers the passer-by a chance to step into a world set utterly apart from ordinary high street bank branches. On the corner of Arlington Street and Piccadilly, at No 160, is a branch of Barclays Bank designed by Curtis Green that is a luxurious oriental world of whimsy. Four Venetian red lacquered columns glow with reflected light against black lacquered counters picked out in gold. The surface of the central desk is red and covered with oriental scenes, and high on a side wall hangs a red and gold chinoiserie panel.

Opposite Barclays, at No 63 Piccadilly on the corner of Albermarle Street, is Curtis Green's branch of the National Westminster, built in the late 1920s and refurbished last year. This is an unusually tall street façade, but Curtis Green has managed to articulate it successfully with the help of borrowed models from the Italian Renaissance. The ground floor level is arched in the style of an Italian palazzo and the stonework of the door frames and the cornice is decorated with elaborate rose devices. Curtis Green inserted a tall mezzanine level, and for the top three floors above the building's cornice incorporated a loggia bound with an elaborately worked iron balcony.

The building is thoroughly classical — its doors and railings with Italianate handles and decorations emphasise the strength and security that a bank ought to possess — and would not have disgraced the Medici family. Bearing a passing resemblance to the opulent city banks of East Coast North America of the 1920s (done in the "Big Bow Wow" style of Corinth USA), the new National Westminster, when it opened in 1928, with its large grandiose interiors just visible from the street, immediately pulled in customers.

Today the branch retains much of its splendid green and white chequerboard marble floor, a series of fine pendant lights and an elaborate Greek key pattern circling the high ceiling, and a striking modern tapestry by Tom Phillips. Magnificently spacious, this has never been an average bank branch.

The 1920s was a period when all the leading banks were involved in a mad rush to provide more branches and attract more customers. Competition was intense, particularly on this stretch of Piccadilly. Curtis Green had only recently converted the glamorous Wolseley Motor Car showroom at 160 Piccadilly into his celebrated Barclays Bank branch. And Sir Edwin Lutyens had designed an exquisite little branch for the Midland Bank on the corner of St James's, with two rooms set aside for ladies and American visitors, and fitted out in a sober country-house Georgian style with reproduction walnut furniture.

The prevailing wisdom of the day was that bank buildings should reflect the monumental wealth and security of their occupiers. Architects were asked to build in an appropriately noble style.

Curtis Green built two banks in Piccadilly in the 1920s and Stratton House a little further along the street. The climax of his career was the commission to build the Dorchester in 1930. But more Londoners will remember him for his bank branches. As Professor C. H. Reilly wrote in the *Architectural Review* in 1927, his bank interiors were delightful. "There is none of the sense of depression which our bank interiors are generally so careful to provide. To be told one was overdrawn in Mr Curtis Green's bank would merely produce a laugh, and how much better."

JOANNA PITTMAN

The high ceiling completes the thoroughly classical interior

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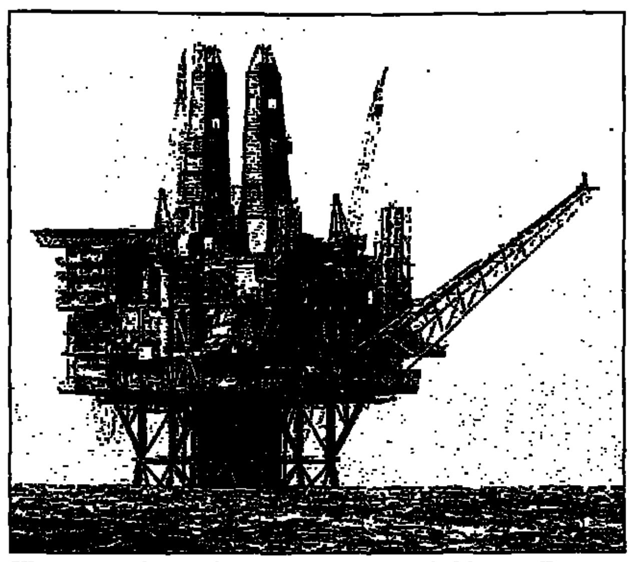
STOCK MARKET MICHAEL CLARK

Upbeat view on windfall tax helps BG to shine



The continuing slide in the price of crude hit the oil sector

BG was the best performing company among the top 100, climbing 6½p to 173½p, as a clutch of brokers rushed to recommend the shares to their clients.

SBC Warburg has joined the growing number of brokers to suggest that the imposition of a windfall tax on the utilities by an incoming Labour government has already been factored into the market. Top of its shopping list is BG, half of the British Gas demerger earlier this year.

On Thursday, Credit Lyonnais Laing tipped BG as one to "buy" and now Warburg is pushing the stock to clients. UBS is also said to be telling clients that BG is worth 200p a share and more if the Monopolies & Mergers Commission comes out in favour of the company in its dispute with Ofgas, the industry regulator.

Panmure Gordon, the broker, prefers **PowerGen**, up 7½p at 616p, among the utilities. Other utilities went better as the market began to take a more upbeat view of the windfall tax situation.

Among the electricity companies **British Energy** rose 6p to 134p, **National Power** 9p to 505½p, **Scottish Hydro** 5½p to 370p and **Southern Electric** 7½p to 396p. The water sector saw **Severn Trent** firm 9½p to 708p, **Thames Water** 10p to 676½p, **United Utilities** 11p to 632½p, **Yorkshire Water** 19p to 350p, and **Wessex Water** 9p to 380½p.

Share prices generally ended the week on a steady note but below their best of the day. After weathering a subdued set of US payroll numbers for March, London was dragged lower by another volatile start to trading in New York. It saw the Dow Jones industrial average down more than 70 points during the first hour of trading before rallying strongly.

The FT-SE 100 index touched 4,247.6 before reducing its lead to 22.0 at 4,236.6. That's a fall on the week of 76.3. A total of 772 million shares changed hands with brokers reporting some genuine retail demand from both institutional and private clients.

The continuing slide in the price of crude oil on world markets provided another bumpy ride for the oil companies. Among the leaders **BP** fell 13p to 670½p, while **Shell** shed 8p at £10.33½.

News of some disappointing drilling results in the Gulf of Mexico brought the recent strong run by **British Borneo** to a grinding halt with the shares finishing 148½p down at £13.91½. A statement from the company said the oil found was too heavy to extract commercially.

Elsewhere in the sector, **Enterprise Oil** rose 3½p to 620p, **Pittencrief** 1½p to 45p, and **Seafield Resources** 4p to 56p. **Lasmo** was 6p cheaper at 218½p after BZW urged clients to go underweight in the stock.

In contrast the banks enjoyed some solid support. Leading the way was **Abbey National**, 14p better at 742p, along with **HSBC**, 22½p to £14.47, **Barclays**, 16½p to £10.29, **National Westminster**, 14½p to 689½p, **Royal Bank of Scotland**, 5p to 523½p and **Standard Chartered**, 4p to 826p.

Siebe touched 970p before recovering to close a net 7½p lower at 986½p after NatWest Securities reduced its recommendation for the shares from "hold" to "reduce". The broker reported signs of a slowdown as the group's competitive lead begins to narrow and Foxboro starts to lose some of its momentum.

But a "buy" recommendation boosted **Tomkins**, which ended the day 5p better at 274p. SBC Warburg has made a sum-of-the-parts valuation of the business and has set a target price of 316p a share.

Further reflection on this week's profits news from **Senior Engineering** lifted the price 6½p to 131p. Beeson Gregory, the broker, is sticking with a pre-tax profit forecast of £35.1 million compared with £29.5 million last time for the year to January 31. But it says the group has the potential to beat its forecast.

Rank Organisation continued to make headway with a rise of 11p to 447½p as brokers reflected on this week's sale of its film distribution business to **Carlton Communications**, 1p easier at 511p. Now hopes are growing that Rank has found a buyer for its 49 per cent stake in Rank Xerox. Brokers say Rank Xerox could command a price tag of almost £1 billion. The proceeds from such a sale may well be used to finance a share buyback operation.

There seems to be no stopping little **Drew Scientific** where the price touched 240p before closing 32½p higher at 195p despite the best efforts of the company and its broker to play down recent speculation. It relates to the group's attempt at developing a new marker for the onset of cardiovascular disease. The share price has more than trebled in the past few weeks after a placing at 52p.

Bickerton Group made a cautious debut on Aim after a placing by Teather & Greenwood, the broker, at 40p. Shares in the builder and property developer opened at 44½p before ending the day at 42p, a premium of 2p.

Also on Aim, **Torch Holdings** was unmoved at 107½p in first time trading, while on the main board **Oxford Technology**, the venture capitalist, was steady at 95p on its market debut.

☐ **GILT-EDGED:** Bond prices took the latest US payroll numbers in their stride to end the session near their best levels of the day. They also outperformed German bunds supported by renewed gains for the pound against the mark. Brokers said the volatility that had been expected to accompany the payroll numbers failed to materialise.

In the futures pit, the June series of the long gilt ended £¼ better at £108²¹⁄₃₂ in modest trading that saw just 47,000 contracts completed.

In the cash market, longer dated issues saw Treasury 8 per cent 2015 firm £⁹⁄₃₂ to £101¹⁵⁄₁₆, while at the shorter end Treasury 8 per cent 2000 was three ticks firmer at £102¼.

☐ **NEW YORK:** Sell-offs in the bond market and in IBM shares kept the Dow Jones industrial average trading lower at midday, down 35.12 at 6,442.23.

Keep an eye on Cortecs International during the next couple of weeks. The company is to give an update on trials of its treatment for osteoporosis, or brittle bones. Positive news could provide a further boost to the shares, which have come up from the 165p level this year. They closed yesterday at 250p, down 6p.

MOVERS OF THE WEEK

	Current price	Week's change	
Drew Scientific	195p	+112p	Speculative buying
Amstrad	215p	+15p	Dancall sold for £92 million
Nobo Group	150p	+38½p	Bid approach
Trafficmaster	332½p	+55½p	German deal announced
Interoute Telecom	57½p	-39½p	Profits setback
Hewden-Stuart	147½p	+15½p	Comments on trading
AH Ball	25½p	-7p	News of losses
Cementone	68½p	+22½p	Speculative buying
British Borneo	£13.91½	-107p	Drilling report

MAJOR INDICES

New York (midday):	
Dow Jones	6442.23 (-35.12)
S&P Composite	748.31 (-2.01)
Tokyo:	
Nikkei Average	17860.59 (-268.72)
Hong Kong:	
Hang Seng	12204.59 (+149.42)
Amsterdam:	
EOE Index	708.43 (+6.32)
Sydney:	
AO	2369.5 (+8.5)
Frankfurt:	
DAX	3244.93 (+29.69)
Singapore:	
Straits	2075.78 (-2.30)
Brussels:	
General	11646.70 (+14.64)
Paris:	
CAC-40	2517.97 (+3.45)
Zurich:	
SKA Gen	933.90 (+1.80)
London:	
FT 30	2817.4 (+15.9)
FTSE 100	4236.6 (+22.0)
FTSE 250	4514.8 (+10.2)
FTSE 350	2092.4 (+9.6)
FTSE Eurotrack 100	2100.19 (+4.75)
FTSE All-Share	2064.97 (+8.90)
FTSE Non Financials	2130.77 (+7.05)
FTSE Fixed Interest	116.34 (-0.84)
FTSE Govt Secs	93.41 (+0.01)
Bargains	64639
SEAQ Volume	779.7m
US$	1.6402 (-0.0013)
German Mark	2.7490 (+0.0103)
Exchange Index	98.6 (+0.3)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
£:ECU	1.4049
£:SDR	1.1821
RPI	155.0 Feb (2.7%) Jan 1987=100
RPIX	154.5 Feb (2.9%) Jan 1987=100

RECENT ISSUES

Aurora Inv Trust	100	...
Avalon Oil	101½	-2
Avis Europe	127	+½
Bickerton	42	...
Cambridge Antibdy	582	-3
Charlton Athletic	60½	...
Close Bros Prot VCT	95	...
Diagonal	295	...
Donatantonio	71½	...
Harvey Nash	182½	+2
Heal's	210½	...
Helphire Group	117½	...
London Bridge Sftw	297½	-1
M & G High Income	67½	...
M & G High Pckg	101½	...
Newcastle Utd	137½	-1½
Oxford Tech Venture	95	...
Pathfinder Properties	50	+8
Prestbury Leisure	2½	...
Q Group	116½	+1
Torch Hldgs	107½	...
Whitehead Mann	144½	...
World Telecom	171½	...
Worldsec	177	...

RIGHTS ISSUES

Biocure n/p (9)	15½	...
Cliveden n/p (75)	7½	...
JKX Oil & Gas n/p (34)	7	-½
Partco n/p (300)	9½	...
Saville Gordon n/p (55)	¼	...

MAJOR CHANGES

RISES:	
BLP Group	157½p (+14p)
Flying Flw Uls	272½p (+17p)
Plasmon	183½p (+10p)
Country Gdns	206½p (+11p)
Danka Bs Sys	470p (+20p)
Inchcape	262½p (+10p)
Cobham	599½p (+21p)
AEA Tech	470p (+15p)
FALLS:	
Macdonald Htls	201p (-14½p)
Berkeley Gp	711½p (-16p)
Grampian	262½p (-9p)
Utd Assurance	473½p (-12½p)
Jardine Math	353½p (-9p)
Br Petroleum	670½p (-13p)

Closing Prices Page 39

TEMPUS

National insecurity

WHAT a shock to learn that a proposed investment by GEC in Thomson-CSF, a French defence electronics group, is perceived by the French Government as a potential threat to national security. The British company is already working on defence projects with Matra and Thomson, but GEC gambled in making a sole bid to take on the 58 per cent government interest in Thomson-CSF. Having bungled a previous attempt to sell the company, feelings of insecurity were clearly high among French mandarins.

Still, they could well regret spurning GEC's candidature. Unlike the rival French bidders, Lagardère and Alcatel, GEC is loaded with cash and would probably have paid well over the odds for the opportunity to stitch together Marconi and Thomson-CSF. There is also the risk that France could lose out longer term.

Impatience is growing among European defence contractors over the French obsession with control over defence-related assets. A less chauvinistic approach towards ownership might have offered France the negotiating ploy of ensuring that the focus of any pan-European defence industry remained on French soil, just as Airbus Industrie has made its home in Toulouse. GEC will doubtless attempt to slot itself into either the Alcatel or Lagardère bids but it is clear that it will not accept shared ownership of Marconi.

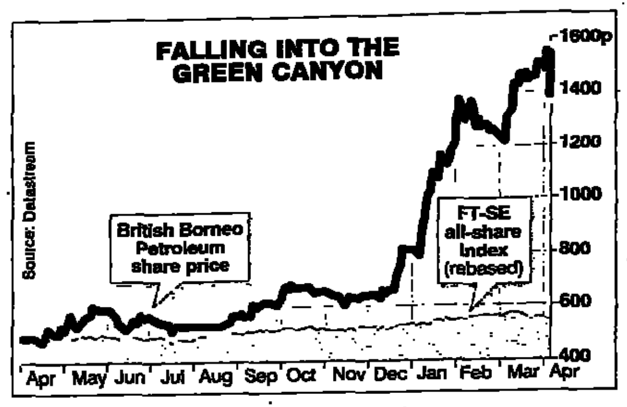
GEC's aggressive push for its candidature marks a departure from the softly, softly style of its previous chief executive. George Simpson clearly prefers the direct approach. If the co-operative spirit remains absent in Paris, there is the risk that Europe's defence contractors will look westward for deals.

British Borneo

OIL companies rarely advertise minor drilling setbacks, so yesterday's report from British Borneo Petroleum Syndicate on its Green Canyon well in the Gulf of Mexico sounded like a confession. Expectations of a further 70 million barrels in reserves have turned to nought.

This is no tragedy — the oil company has another three prospects worth exploring in its Green Canyon acreage — but British Borneo's share price took a pounding, losing 10 per cent of its value. Still, at yesterday's closing price of £13.91, British Borneo shares are trading at a level almost double estimates of their net present value, about 750p including 130p for the exploration prospects.

This is an extraordinary change from a year ago when most exploration companies were valued by the market at discounts to estimates of their net worth. Last summer's oil price bubble had something to do with changed expectations, as did the bid for Clyde Petroleum. But British Borneo's successful acquisition of the Morpeth field and seismic surveys of the deep water Gulf of Mexico have blinded the market to risk. The seismic information has enabled British Borneo to identify potential oil reservoirs but, as yesterday's well has shown, it cannot determine whether the oil has commercial value. This is still a high-risk business and the market seems to have forgotten that the oil price is falling.



Lex Service

THE stock market was unimpressed by news of good sales by Lex Service, the motor dealer. The current consensus is that Lex will make profits of around £58 million this year, equivalent to earnings of 35p a share. That puts the company on a miserly p/e multiple of less than ten.

Lex has already made moves to improve its performance. It has shed nearly 30 smaller dealerships, concentrating on its strongest businesses, leasing and parts distribution, and it has brought in a new chief executive.

Sir Trevor Chinn, chairman, was able to tell shareholders at yesterday's annual meeting that this year has begun well. Lex Vehicle Leasing, Multipart, and the Hyundai import business all increased their profits.

The Hyundai joint venture, of which Lex may soon gain full ownership, turned profitable last year and is continuing to grow strongly. First-quarter registrations reached 5,500, more than 50 per cent higher than last year. Low returns from the retail division are a worry, but at least Lex has scope to increase margins.

Lex has often disappointed, and it may take time for it to win back the City's confidence. However, if it can continue this progress, the shares should earn a re-rating.

Millennium

BRACE yourselves. There are now only 999 days left until the new millennium, when, if you believe the hype, the commercial world will be sucked into a digital abyss, profits and all.

As the clock ticks away, companies are already taking expensive evasive action. NatWest expects to spend £100 million teaching its computers to recognise dates starting in 2000. An almost Masonic silence from other companies over their costs lends weight to the Armageddon view — that the world and its dividend will be wiped out on 01/01/01.

With every good horror story there is a mix of fact and fiction. Year 2000 warnings carry a richer mix than most. Any company still unaware of the problem deserves its fate. Computer consultancies have been exploiting a rich seam, requesting blank cheques in return for sorting out old computer programmes.

Secondly, there will be no 1930s-style recession, nor even a dip in dividends. By allocating the cost as capex, companies can capitalise it in their balance sheets. This avoids a big profits hit and a hole in the operations budget.

In the end, the millennium meltdown begins to look more like a business opportunity than a catastrophe. Losers will be those prepared to pay big money to computer salesmen. The winners are easy to identify.

EDITED BY CARL MORTISHED

COMMODITIES

LIFFE

COCOA

May	1044-1043	Jul	1080-1079
Jul	1059-1058	Sep	1091-1090
Sep	1069-1067	Dec	1103-1100
Dec	1049-1048	Mar	1120-1110
Mar	1061-1058		
May	1072-1069		Volume: 8030

ROBUSTA COFFEE ($)

May	1570-1565	Jan	1560-1555
Jul	1580-1578	Mar	1545-1530
Sep	1595-1590	May	1535-1510
Nov	1582-1575		Volume: 5918

WHITE SUGAR (FOB)

Reuters		Dec	302.9-01.8
Spot: 312.0		Mar	303.9-03.3
May	311.0-10.6	May	303.0-99.3
Aug	307.4-07.2	Aug	unq
Oct	304.0-03.0		Volume: 1975

MEAT & LIVESTOCK COMMISSION

Average fatstock prices at representative markets on April 3

(p/kg lw)	Pig	Sheep	Cattle
GB:	85.31	148.98	98.23
(+/-)	+1.43	+5.65	+3.86
Eng/Wales:	85.37	149.75	97.59
(+/-)	+1.42	+4.85	+4.46
(%)	+155.0	+138.0	+175.0
Scotland:	74.45	145.72	100.85
(+/-)	-3.25	+7.28	+4.59
(%)	+14.0	-76.0	+3.0

ICIS-LOR (London 6.00pm)

CRUDE OILS ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	17.35	+0.15
Brent 15 day (May)	18.25	+0.10
Brent 15 day (Jun)	18.45	+0.05
W Texas Intermediate (May)	19.60	+0.05
W Texas Intermediate (Jun)	19.70	+0.05

PRODUCTS ($/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

	Bid	Offer
Premium Unld	200 (-1)	202 (-1)
Gasoil EEC	164 (n/c)	166 (n/c)
3.5 Fuel Oil	83 (+3)	84 (+1)
Naphtha	184 (n/c)	189 (n/c)

IPE FUTURES (GNI Ltd)

GAS OIL

Apr	162.25-62.50	Jul	167.50-67.75
May	163.50-63.75	Aug	169.50-69.75
Jun	165.50-65.75		Vol: 21235

BRENT (6.00pm)

May	18.22-18.24	Aug	18.63 BID
Jun	18.44-18.45	Sep	n/a
Jul	18.54-18.56		Vol: 22084

GNI LONDON GRAIN FUTURES

LIFFE WHEAT (close £/t)		LIFFE BARLEY (close £/t)	
May	98.00	May	93.00
Jul	100.90	Sep	93.00
Sep	96.00	Nov	95.00
Nov	98.00	Jan	97.00
Jan	100.00	Mar	99.00
Volume: 834		Volume: 67	

LIFFE POTATO (£/t)	Open	Close
May	44.5	44.0
Jun	unq	67.0
Nov	–	70.0
		Volume: 305

RUBBER (No 1 RSS Cif p/k)

May 76.50-77.00

LIFFE BIFFEX (GNI Ltd $10/pt)

	High	Low	Close
Apr 97	1515	1500	1510
May 97	1515	1495	1506
Jun 97	—	—	1360
Jul 97	1260	1250	1260
Vol: 206 lots		Open interest: 2924	

Index 1467 -14

LONDON METAL EXCHANGE

(Official) (Volume prev day)	Cash:	3mth:	Rudolf Wolff Vol:
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)	2401.0-2403.0	2346.0-2347.0	1454525
Lead ($/tonne)	685.00-685.50	680.00-681.00	182900
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)	1256.0-1257.0	1275.0-1276.0	813450
Tin ($/tonne)	5840.0-5845.0	5865.0-5870.0	14005
Aluminium Hi Gde ($/tonne)	1583.0-1583.5	1617.0-1617.5	2324250
Nickel ($/tonne)	7530.0-7535.0	7645.0-7650.0	10560

LIFFE OPTIONS

Series		Calls Apr	Jul	Oct	Puts Apr	Jul	Oct
Alld Dom	420	31	38	46	0½	11	15½
(*449½)	460	4½	15½	25½	13½	31	35½
ASDA	100	7	10½	12	0½	2½	5
(*106½)	110	1	5	7	4½	7	9½
Boots	650	35½	50½	57	1	14	20
(*683½)	700	4½	21½	31	19½	38½	45
Br Airways	600	35	47½	59½	1	14½	20½
(*632½)	650	5	21	34½	20½	40	46
BP	650	23½	45	56½	4½	21	29½
(*669½)	700	2	22	33½	31½	48	56
Br Steel	160	3½	8½	11	3	12	14
(*160½)	180	0	2½	4½	19½	27½	28
C & W	460	36½	50	58½	0½	12½	18½
(*495)	500	8	27	36½	11½	30	36½
CU	600	47	75½	90½	2	24	39
(*645)	650	13	48	64½	17	45	63½
ICI	700	12	35½	45½	10	24	35½
(*700)	750	1	15½	24	50	55	66
Land Sec	750	20	35½	44	4½	23½	29½
(*765½)	800	1	12½	21½	35½	56½	60
M & S	460	33	42½	51	0½	9½	12½
(*492)	500	5	18	29	12	28½	30½
Nat West	650	41	64½	74	1	16	27½
(*689)	700	7	35½	47	16½	37	51
Safeway plc	360	9	19½	26½	4½	18½	23½
(*363)	390	1½	8	15	27	38½	43
Sainsbury	330	7	17	24	4	16	19½
(*333½)	360	0	6½	12½	26½	37	38½
Shell	1000	36	50	71	11	30½	46½
(*1032½)	1050	5½	28	47	49½	58	73½
Smkl Bch	850	19½	52½	71½	11½	34½	47½
(*857½)	900	3½	32½	49	43½	63	75
Storehse	300	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	330	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trafalgar	50	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	60	—	—	—	—	—	—
Zeneca	1700	57	116½	162	13½	51½	74
(*1738½)	1800	11½	72	106½	69½	103	123½
Series		**Apr**	**Jul**	**Oct**	**Apr**	**Jul**	**Oct**
BAT Ind	500	22½	48	55	5½	21	32½
(*518)	550	2	25	33	32	48	60½
Vodafone	260	14	25½	32	1½	11	15
(*271½)	280	3	15½	22	11	21	25
Series		**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**	**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**
Grnd Met	460	24½	35½	44	6½	14½	19
(*475½)	500	5½	15½	24½	27½	38	40
Ladbroke	220	10	17½	21½	5	9½	12½
(*223½)	240	2½	8½	12½	18	21	23½
Utd Bisc	220	13½	21½	25	5	8½	13
(*220)	240	4	12	15½	14½	19	23½

Series		Calls Apr	Jul	Oct	Puts Apr	Jul	Oct
BAA	500	10	25½	33	5½	20½	24
(*502½)	550	0	6½	14	47½	54	56
Thames W.	650	30	53	58	3	32	35
(*676½)	700	4½	28	34	26	60	63
Series		**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**	**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**
BTR	240	22	29½	33½	2½	6	8½
(*259)	260	8½	17	21½	9	12½	17
Br Aero	1350	48	87	111	36	54	67½
(*1351)	1400	22	62½	86	65	81½	93½
Br Telcm	420	20½	29½	32½	8	23½	26
(*429)	460	5	12	14½	32½	49½	51
Cadbury	500	42½	56½	62	4	10½	14½
(*535½)	550	12½	27	35	23½	31	35½
Guinness	460	43½	54	61½	2½	7	10½
(*497)	500	17	28½	37	15½	21	25½
GEC	360	28	35½	39½	3	11	14½
(*382½)	390	9½	18½	24	14	26	29½
Hanson	260	19½	28½	32	5	9½	13½
(*273½)	280	8½	17½	21½	13½	18½	23
LASMO	200	23½	29	33½	3½	8½	8
(*218½)	220	11½	18	22	11	17	16½
LucasVarity	180	19	24½	27½	2½	4½	8
(*197)	200	6½	13½	17	10½	13	18
Pilkingtn	120	7½	10	—	5½	10	—
(*121)	130	3½	6	—	11½	17	—
Prudential	550	24	41½	52	14½	23½	32
(*557)	600	7	19½	29½	46	52	59½
Redland	330	32	36	43½	6½	14	18½
(*357½)	360	12	19½	28	21½	29	37½
R-Royce	240	11½	22½	26½	9	15½	17½
(*245)	260	4	14	18	21½	27	29
Tesco	330	22½	30	36	5½	11	15
(*349½)	360	5½	15½	21½	21½	26½	30½
Williams	330	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	360	—	—	—	—	—	—

FTSE INDEX (*4230½)

	4100	4150	4200	4250	4300	4350
Calls						
Apr	150½	106½	67½	38½	19	8½
May	191½	152½	118	88	64½	43
Jun	222½	186½	153½	122	97½	74
Jul	249½	215	180	152½	125½	100½
Dec	343	—	278	—	222	—
Puts						
Apr	11½	19	33	55½	87½	128½
May	40	58	76	96	123	153
Jun	68½	83	101	121½	147½	175½
Jul	82	97	114	137½	161	188½
Dec	142	—	176	—	218	—

Series		Calls Apr	Jul	Oct	Puts Apr	Jul	Oct
Abby Nat	700	43½	69½	81	1½	17½	26
(*741)	750	9½	40	53	16½	38	48
Amstrad	140	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	160	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barclays	1000	31	70	87½	7½	30½	49
(*1022)	1050	7	44	62	32½	55	74
Natl Pwr	500	12½	34½	35½	6½	29	37
(*505½)	550	0½	15½	16½	44½	63½	70
Series		**Apr**	**Jul**	**Oct**	**Apr**	**Jul**	**Oct**
Glaxo W	1050	43	80½	95	5½	26½	44
(*1089½)	1100	14	52½	67	23½	48½	67
HSBC	1400	56	113½	140	7½	44	69
(*1446½)	1450	23	86	113½	34½	66½	92
Reuter	550	39½	60	70	1	14	18½
(*586½)	600	7½	31	42	18½	33½	40
Royal & Sun	431	15½	—	—	2½	—	—
(*442)	460	3	18	28	19	30	37
Series		**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**	**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**
Blue Circ	390	25	37½	43½	6	12	18
(*407)	420	9	21½	28	20	26	32½
Series		**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**	**May**	**Aug**	**Nov**
Kingfishr	650	34	52½	63½	10½	21½	27½
(*669½)	700	9½	27	38½	37½	46	52½
Series		**Jun**			**Jun**		
Br Gas	220	19½	—	—	9½	—	—
(*235)	240	9	—	—	20	—	—
Series		**Jun**	**Sep**	**Dec**	**Jun**	**Sep**	**Dec**
Dixons	500	59	68	77½	6	16½	20½
(*546½)	550	26½	37½	49	24	35½	42
EMI Group	1150	60	84	98	39	61	72½
(*1156)	1200	38	61	75	66	88½	99½
Tarmac	100	7	10½	12	4½	6	8½
(*104½)	110	3	6½	8	10½	12	14½
Hillsdwn	180	13	14½	—	5½	7½	—
(*191)	200	2½	5½	—	19	20	—
Lonrho	130	12	15½	18½	4	6½	8
(*138)	140	6½	10	13½	8½	11	13
Sears	90	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	100	—	—	—	—	—	—
Thorn EMI	1500	—	—	—	—	—	—
(unq)	1600	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tomkins	260	22	27	30	5	11½	13
(*274)	280	10½	16	19½	13½	21	23
Lloyds TSB	460	43½	54	63½	8	15½	20
(*491)	500	19½	31	42	23½	32½	38
Scot Pwr	360	18½	24½	28	13	21	24
(*361½)	390	2	12	15½	31	40½	43
Unilever	1500	59	94½	117	34	44	54½
(*1541)	1600	17½	47	67	91	100	107½

April 4, 1997 Tot: 24400 Call: 8567 Put: 15833 FTSE Call: 2148 Put: 3665

*Underlying security price.

LONDON FINANCIAL FUTURES

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol
Long Gilt	Jun 97	108-18	108-27	108-12	108-21	48104
Previous open interest: 172462	Sep 97	108-14	108-14	108-06	108-14	722
German Govt Bond (Bund)	Jun 97	99.31	99.51	99.08	99.30	181961
Previous open interest: 260516	Sep 97	98.40	98.45	98.19	98.32	2278
Italian Govt Bond (BTP)	Jun 97	124.90	126.05	124.88	125.60	69212
Previous open interest: 107252	Sep 97	125.20	125.63	125.20	125.63	132
Japanese Govt Bond (JGB)	Jun 97	126.85	127.03	126.84	126.95	2221
	Sep 97	125.66	125.66	125.65	125.64	21
Three Mth Sterling	Jun 97	93.30	93.31	93.28	93.30	16944
	Sep 97	92.99	93.01	92.98	93.00	7085
Previous open interest: 443714	Dec 97	92.76	92.79	92.74	92.76	12496
Three Mth Euromark	Jun 97	96.75	96.77	96.74	96.76	39602
Previous open interest: 1227752	Sep 97	96.68	96.69	96.67	96.69	18419
Three Mth Eurolira	Jun 97	92.96	93.07	92.94	92.98	38485
Previous open interest: 257332	Sep 97	93.22	93.35	93.20	93.28	24494
Three Mth Euroyen	Sep 97	99.32	99.32	99.32	99.32	30
	Dec 97	99.17	99.17	99.17	99.17	300
Three Mth Euroswiss	Jun 97	98.16	98.17	98.12	98.16	5340
Previous open interest: 91220	Sep 97	98.10	98.12	98.07	98.11	3515
Three Mth ECU	Jun 97	95.78	95.80	95.78	95.80	850
Previous open interest: 30617	Sep 97	95.71	95.73	95.69	95.70	451
FTSE 100	Jun 97	4253.0	4278.0	4231.0	4253.0	15523
Previous open interest: 64379	Sep 97				4276.0	0

MONEY RATES (%)

Base Rates: Clearing Banks 6 Finance Hse 6½
Discount Market Loans: O/night high: 6½ Low 5½ Week fixed: 6⅛
Treasury Bills (Dis): Buy: 2 mth 6; 3 mth 6⅛. Sell: 2 mth 5⅞; 3 mth: 6.

	1 mth	2 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
Prime Bank Bills (Dis):	6⅛-6	6⅛-6⅛	6¼-6⅛	6½-6⅜	
Sterling Money Rates:	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6¼-6⅛	6½-6⅜	7-6¾
Interbank:	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6¼-6⅛	6½-6⅜	7-6¾
Overnight: open 6⅛, close 6.					
Local Authority Deps:	6⅛	n/a	6¼	6½	6⅞
Sterling CDs:	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6¼-6⅛	6½-6⅜	6⅞-6¾
Dollar CDs:	5.58	n/a	5.71	5.88	6.20
Building Society CDs:	6⅛-6⅛	6⅛-6⅛	6¼-6⅛	6½-6⅜	6⅞-6¾

TREASURY BILLS: Applcts: £1.171m allotted: £200m: Bids: £98.48% received: 75%; Last week: £98.505% received: 70%; Avge rate: £6.0914% last wk £5.9914%; Next week: £200m.

EUROPEAN MONEY DEPOSITS (%)

Currency	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	Call
Dollar:	5⁷⁄₁₆-5⁵⁄₁₆	5½-5⅜	5⅝-5½	5⅞-5¾	5¼-4¾
Deutschemark:	3¼-2⅞	3⅛-3	3¼-3⅛	3¼-3⅛	3¼-2¾
French Franc:	3⅝-3½	3⅝-3½	3⅝-3½	3⅝-3½	3¼-2¾
Swiss Franc:	1⅜-1¼	1½-1⅜	1½-1⅜	1½-1⅜	2¼-1¼
Yen:	½-⅜	⅝-½	⅝-½	⅝-½	1-par

GOLD/PRECIOUS METALS (Baird & Co)

Bullion: Open $347.60-347.90 Close: $347.20-347.70 High: $347.50-348.00
Low: $346.10-346.60 AM: $347.35 PM: $347.40

Krugerrand: $346.25-349.25 (£212.50-214.50)

Platinum: $364.00 (£221.90) Silver: $5.73 (£2.885) Palladium: $146.00 (£89.00)

STERLING SPOT AND FORWARD RATES

Mkt Rates for April 4	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Amsterdam	3.0846-3.0926	3.0859-3.0891	¾-⅝pr	2¼-2⅛pr
Brussels	56.540-56.760	56.589-56.673	17-12pr	45-38pr
Copenhagen	10.447-10.474	10.456-10.466	¼-⅛pr	¾-⅝pr
Dublin	1.0394-1.0435	1.0399-1.0418	7-3pr	20-14pr
Frankfurt	2.7409-2.7500	2.7475-2.7500	¾-⅝pr	2¼-2⅛pr
Lisbon	275.39-276.16	275.56-275.90	¼-⅛ds	¾-⅝ds
Madrid	231.11-232.47	231.99-232.18	13-3pr	41-23pr
Milan	2715.1-2723.9	2717.8-2721.9	17-33ds	46-68ds
Montreal	2.2747-2.2825	2.2792-2.2812	0.56-0.51pr	1.15-1.07pr
New York	1.6366-1.6418	1.6398-1.6408	0.725-0.525pr	0.235-0.205pr
Oslo	11.136-11.156	11.144-11.156	¼-⅛pr	⅝-½pr
Paris	9.2300-9.2582	9.2493-9.2582	2⅞-2⅛pr	7-6⅛pr
Stockholm	12.451-12.500	12.451-12.471	¼-⅛pr	⅝-½pr
Tokyo	202.85-203.75	203.48-203.75	¾-⅝pr	3-2½pr
Vienna	19.287-19.355	19.337-19.355	¼-⅛pr	⅝-½pr
Zurich	2.3472-2.3557	2.3472-2.3503	¾-⅝pr	2⅞-2½pr

Source: Extel Premium - pr. Discount - ds.

DOLLAR RATES

Australia	1.2870-1.2886
Austria	11.79-11.80
Belgium (Com)	34.59-34.64
Canada	1.3893-1.3898
Denmark	6.3891-6.3911
France	5.6485-5.6495
Germany	1.6760-1.6770
Hong Kong	7.7480-7.7490
Ireland	1.5719-1.5739
Italy	1659.72-1662.72
Japan	124.10-124.20
Malaysia	2.4862-2.4872
Netherlands	1.8861-1.8866
Norway	6.8055-6.8115
Portugal	168.38-168.48
Singapore	1.4368-1.4378
Spain	141.80-141.90
Sweden	7.6062-7.6136
Switzerland	1.4356-1.4366

OTHER STERLING

Argentina peso*	1.6382-1.6409
Australia dollar	2.1068-2.1108
Bahrain dinar	0.6120-0.6240
Brazil real*	1.7320-1.7365
China yuan	13.443-13.743
Cyprus pound	0.8135-0.8235
Finland markka	8.1625-8.2785
Greece drachma	430.75-437.75
Hong Kong dollar	12.6835-12.6929
India rupee	58.42-59.38
Indonesia rupiah	3913.0-3981.6
Kuwait dinar KD	0.4930-0.5020
Malaysia ringgit	4.0699-4.0740
New Zealand dollar	2.3707-2.3739
Pakistan rupee	65.30 Buy
Saudi Arabia riyal	5.9075-6.0315
Singapore dollar	2.3520-2.3551
S Africa rand (com)	7.1980-7.3000
U A E dirham	5.9625-6.0865

Barclays Bank GTS * Lloyds Bank

FTSE VOLUMES

3i	677	Land Secs	1,100
ASDA Gp	16,000	Legal & Gn	2,000
Abbey Ntl	5,100	Lloyds TSB	8,700
Allied Dom	1,800	LucasVarity	5,600
AB Foods	1,700	Marks Spr	6,100
BAA	731	Mercury Asset	640
BAT Inds	5,100	NatWst Bk	9,700
BG	16,500	Nat Grid	3,300
BOC	934	Nat Power	7,100
BP	13,500	Next	2,000
BSkyB	3,400	Orange	1,000
BTR	6,200	P & O	7,800
BT	22,000	Pearson	3,000
Bk of Scot	2,600	PowerGen	3,900
Barclays	5,400	Prudential	2,600
Bass	1,200	RMC	300
Blue Circle	1,000	RTZ	4,200
Boots	672	Railtrack	4,700
BAe	1,200	Rank Group	4,200
BA	5,200	Reckitt Col	1,400
British Land	517	Reed Intl	739
Brit Steel	10,700	Rentokil Inl	1,800
Burmah Cstl	823	Reuters	4,100
Burton	2,100	Rolls Royce	4,000
Cable Wire	4,700	Royal & Sun	3,700
Cadbury	3,600	Royal Bk Sct	5,300
Carlton Cms	840	Safeway	2,300
Centrica	6,100	Sainsbury	3,500
Cm Union	1,500	Schroders	23
Dixons	2,100	Scot & New	742
EMI	1,400	Scot Power	4,300
Energy Gp	2,600	Svrn Trent	1,000
Enterpr Oil	1,900	Shell Trans	7,300
GKN	636	Siebe	1,900
GRE	4,800	SmKl Bch	4,700
GUS	2,300	Smith Nph	1,800
Gen Acc	1,300	Smiths Inds	1,100
Gen Elec	5,300	Std Chartd	806
Glaxo Well	4,600	TI Gp	465
Granada	3,100	Tate & Lyle	1,600
Grand Met	5,400	Tesco	4,000
Guinness	6,500	Thames W	3,200
HSBC	3,400	Tomkins	1,700
Hanson	2,100	Unilever	2,500
Hays	1,400	Utd Utilities	4,300
ICI	1,500	Utd News	1,600
Imp Tob	4,200	Vodafone	6,000
Kingfisher	4,500	Whitbread	433
LASMO	4,500	Wolseley	377
Ladbroke	1,100	Zeneca	1,600

WALL STREET

	Apr 4 midday	Apr 3 close
AMP Inc	33½	33½
AMR Corp	82	82½
ASA	33½	33½
AT & T	33½	33½
Abbott Labs	55½	55½
Advanced Micro	38½	38½
Aetna Life	86½	86½
Ahmanson (HF)	36½	36½
Air Prod & Chem	66½	67½
AirTouch Comm	23	23½
Alberto-Culver B	25½	25½
Albertson's	32½	33
Alcan Alumnm	32½	32½
Allied Signal	69½	69½
Alum Co of Am	67½	67½
Amax Gold Inc	6½	6½
Amerada Hess	50½	50½
Amer Brands	48½	49½
Amer El Power	40½	41
Amer Express	59	59½
Amer Genl Corp	39½	39½
Amer Home Pr	58½	59½
Amer Intl	115½	115½
Amer Stores	44	44½
Amer Standard	45½	45½
Ameritech	59	59
Amoco	83½	84½
Anheuser-Busch	42½	43½
Apple Computer	19	18½
Archer Daniels	17½	17½
Armco	4	4
Armstrng Wrld	67½	63½
Asarco	27½	27½
Atl Richfield	129½	129
Auto Data Pro	42½	42½
Avery Dennison	37½	38½
Avon Products	51½	51½
Baker Hughes	35½	35½
Baltim Gas & El	26½	26½
Banc One	39½	39½
BankAmerica	100½	101½
Bank of NY	35½	36½
Bankers Tr NY	82½	82½
Barnett Banks	44½	45½
Bausch & Lomb	36½	37½
Baxter Intl	43½	43½
Becton Dickinsn	43½	44½
Bell Atlantic	59½	59½
Bell Industries	17½	17½
BellSouth	41	41½
Black & Decker	30½	30½
Block (H&R)	30½	30½
Boeing	96½	95½
Boise Cascade	28½	28½
Bristol Myrs Sq	61½	62
Browning Ferris	28	28½
Brunswick	26½	26½
Burlington Nthn	72½	73
CMS Energy Corp	31½	31½
CNA Financial	102½	102½
CPC Intl	79½	80
CSX	45½	46½
Campbell Soup	47½	47½
Can Pacific	23	23½
Carolina Pwr	36½	36½
Caterpillar	76½	77½
Central & SW	20½	20½
Champion Intl	43½	43½
Chase Manhat	92½	93½
Chevron Corp	64½	64½
Chrysler	29½	30½
Chubb Corp	52½	52½
Cigna Corp	144½	144½
Citicorp	110½	111½
Clorox	110½	111½
Coastal Corp	45½	45½
Coca Cola	55½	55½
Coca Cola Ent	56½	56½
Colgate-Palm	101½	102
Columbia Gas	57½	57½
ColumbiaHCA	33½	33½
Compaq Comp	74½	74½
Comp Ass Intl	40½	40½
Conagra	52½	53½
Conrail	113½	112½
Cons Edison	29½	29½
Cons Nat Gas	49½	49½
Cooper Inds	42½	43
CoreStates	47½	48
Corning Inc	43½	44½
Crown Cork	53½	53½
Dana Corp	31½	32
Dayton Hudson	42	42½
Deere	43½	44
Delta Air Lines	85½	85½
Deluxe Corp	32½	32½
Digital Equip	26½	26½
Dillard Dept St	30½	30½
Disney (Walt)	72½	72½
Dominion Res	35½	35½
Donelley (RR)	33	33½
Dover Corp	51½	52½
Dow Chemical	78½	79
Dow Jones	41½	41½
Dresser	29½	29½
Duke Power	44½	44½
Dun & Bradstreet	24½	24½
Du Pont	104½	103½
Eastman Chem	53½	53½
Eastman Kodak	73½	74½
Eaton Corp	68½	68½
Edison Intl	21½	21½
Elect Data Sys	39½	39½
Emerson Elec	46	46½
Engelhard Corp	20½	20½
Enron Corp	36½	37½
Entergy	23½	23½
Ethyl Corp	8½	8½
Exxon	101½	102½
FMC Corp	61½	61½
FPL Group	43½	43½
Federal Express	50½	51½
First Bk Sys	73½	73½
First Union Rlty	13	13
Fleet Finl Grp	57½	57½
Fluor Corp	50½	50½
Ford Motor	30½	30½
GTE Corp	44½	45
Gannett	82½	84
Gap Inc Del	32½	32½
Gencorp	18½	18½
Gen Dynamics	63½	64½
Gen Electric	98½	98½
Gen Mills	60½	60½
Gen Motors	53½	54½
Gen Reinsurance	155½	156
Gen Signal	37½	36½
Genuine Parts	44½	45½
Georgia Pac	71½	71½
Gillette	74½	75½
Glaxo Welle ADR	35½	35½
Goodrich (BF)	35½	35½
Goodyear Tire	50½	51½
Grt Atl Pac Tea	24½	24½
Great Wstn Fin	40½	41
Halliburton	64	64½
Harcourt General	44½	44½
Heinz (HJ)	38½	39
Hercules	40	40½
Hershey Foods	50½	50½
Hewlett Packard	50½	50½
Hilton Hotels	24½	24½
Home Depot	53	53
Homestake Mng	14½	14½
Honeywell	68½	69
Household Intl	83½	83½
Houston Inds	20½	20½
Humana	21	21½
ITT Corp	58½	58½
Ikon Office	31	31½
Illinois Tool	83½	84½
Illinova	21½	21½
INCO	31½	32
Ingersoll Rand	43½	42½
Inland Steel	19½	18½
Intel Corp	141½	140½
IBM	127½	131½
Intl Flav & Fr	41½	41½
Intl Paper	39½	38½
James River Va	28½	28½
Jhnsn & Jhnsn	53½	54
Kellogg	65½	65½
Kerr-McGee	58½	59
Kimberly-Clark	49½	50½
Kmart	11½	11½
Knight-Ridder	38½	38½
Lilly (Eli)	82½	82½
Limited Inc	17½	17½
Lincoln Nat	52	52½
Litton	39½	39½
Liz Claiborne	42½	43
Lockheed Martin	79½	79½
Louisiana Pac	19½	19½
MCI Comm	36½	36
Manpower Inc	35½	36½
Marriott Intl	50½	50½
Marsh & McLen	116½	116½
Masco Corp	35½	35½
May Dept St	45½	45½
Maytag Corp	20½	20½
McDonalds	48½	48½
McDonnell D	59	59½
McGraw Hill	50½	50½
Mead Corp	51½	52
Medtronic	62½	62
Mellon Bk	72½	73
Merck Inc	84½	85½
Merrill Lynch	88½	88½
Microsoft	95½	95½
Minnesota Mine	83½	83½
Mobil Corp	124½	124½
Monsanto	38	38
Morgan (JP)	97½	98½
Motorola Inc	59½	59½
Natl Semi	27½	27½
Natl Service Ind	39½	39½
Navistar Int	9½	9½
NY Times A	43	43½
Newmont Mng	39½	39½
Niag Mohawk	8½	8½
Nike B	58½	58½
NL Industries	9½	9½
Noram Energy	14½	14½
Nordstrom	38½	39½
Norfolk Sthrn	85½	85½
Nthn State Pwr	47	47½
Norwest Corp	48½	45½
Nynex Corp	44½	44½
Occidental Pet	23½	23½
Ohio Edison	20½	20½
Oracle	38½	38½
Oryx Energy Co	17½	17½
Overseas Ship	17	17
Owens Corning	38½	38½
PHH Corp	44½	44½
PPG Industries	51½	52
PNC Bank	39½	39½
PP&L Res	20½	20½
Paccar Inc	68½	67½
Pacificorp	20½	20½
Pac Enterprises	30	30½
Pall Corp	22½	22½
Parker Hannifin	40½	40½
Peco Energy	19½	20
Penney (JC)	45½	46
Pennzoil	48½	48½
Pepsico	31½	31½
Pfizer	84	84½
Pharm & Upjhn	35½	36½
Phelps Dodge	71½	71½
Philip Morris	113	114½
Phillips Pet	39½	39½
Pitney Bowes	57½	58½
Polaroid	37	37½
Procter & Gmbl	114½	115
Providian	54½	54
Pub Serv E & G	25½	26
Quaker Oats	36½	36
Ralston Purina	75½	76½
Raychem Corp	80½	80½
Raytheon	43½	43½
Reebok Intl	42½	42½
Reynolds Metals	62½	62½
Rockwell Intl	62½	63½
Rohm & Haas	74½	74
Royal Dutch	170½	170½
Rubbermaid	24	24½
SBC Comms	50½	51½
Safeco Corp	39½	39½
St Paul's Cos	63½	64½
Salomon Inc	52½	53½
Sara Lee Corp	39½	40½
Schering Plough	73	72½
Schlumberger	104½	104½
Seagram	37½	37½
Sears Roebuck	48½	49
Shell Trans	101½	103½
Sherwin Wllms	25½	26½
Skyline Corp	21½	21½
Snap-On-Tools	36½	37½
Southern Co	21½	21½
Sprint Corp	44½	44½
Stanley Works	36½	37½
Sun Company	24½	24½
Sun Microsys	28½	28½
Suntrust	46	45½
Supervalu	29½	29½
Sysco Corp	33½	33½
TRW Inc	50½	50½
TCC Inds	1½	1½
Tandem Comp	11½	11½
Tandy Corp	49½	49½
Temple Inland	50½	51
Tenneco	38½	38½
Texaco	103½	103
Texas Inst	78½	77½
Texas Utilities	34½	34
Textron	101½	102
Time Warner	42½	42½
Times-Mirror A	54½	55½
Timken	53½	52½
Torchmark	53½	53½
Toys R Us	27½	27½
Transamerica	85½	85½
Travelers	47½	48½
Tribune	41½	41½
Tyco Intl	55½	55½
UST Inc	26½	26½
UAL	64½	64½
US Inds	33	33
US West Comm	32½	32½
US West Media	17½	17½
USAirways Group	23½	24½
USX Marathon	26½	27
Unicom	19½	19½
Unilever NV	179½	180½
Union Camp	45½	45½
Union Carbide	42½	43½
Union Pacific	57	57
Unisys Corp	6½	6½
USF&G Corp	20½	20½
US Life	46	46½
United Tech	73½	74½
Unocal Corp	38½	38½
VF Corp	65½	65½
WMX Tech	31	31½
Wal-Mart Stores	27½	27½
Warner-Lambert	84½	85
Wells Fargo	277½	277½
Westinghouse El	18½	18½
Weyerhaeuser	44½	45½
Whirlpool	46	46½
Whitman	23½	23½
Winn Dixie	32½	33
Woolworth	22½	22½
Wrigley (Wm) Jr	56½	56½
Xerox	57½	57½
Yellow Corp	19	19½
Zenith Elecl	10½	10½

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هكذا من الأعلى

UNDER WAY 31

Self-assessed tax marathon up and running

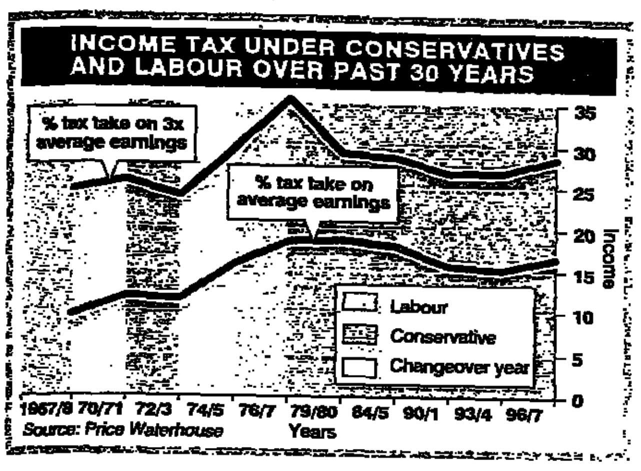
WEEKEND MONEY

ROLLERCOASTER 33

Investors should prepare for a bumpy ride

THE TIMES: PERSONAL FINANCE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Manifestos launched with a query



Source: Price Waterhouse

Marianne Curphey and Nathan Yates on the real story of taxation in the past 30 years

ANGUS MEWSE

Taxation, the role of the family and greater personal financial independence have emerged as key themes of an election campaign that started in earnest this week with the launch of the main parties' manifestos.

Both Labour and the Tories are keen to present themselves as supporters of low taxation and encouragers of enterprise and self-reliance. But a survey carried out exclusively for *The Times* by Price Waterhouse, the accountants, shows that on past performance both main parties have presided over rises in direct taxation during the past 30 years. Focusing on headline rates of direct tax can, and has, distracted voters from significant changes in allowances, tax bands and indirect taxes, according to Price Waterhouse. All such details are conspicuously absent in the manifestos.

Promises of lower headline rates from the two main parties appear prominently. Labour's challenge is to bury once and for all its "tax and spend" image and to reassure voters that it can deliver economic stability. Having promised to peg the standard and upper rates of income tax as an election pledge, Labour has given notice in its election manifesto that it would be looking elsewhere for the money to fund its spending plans, namely a windfall levy on the privatised utilities. The party also announced a long-term objective of a 10p starting rate for income tax.

The Tories, as part of their attempt to appeal to voters on their record, remind them that the basic rate of tax has fallen from 33p to 23p during the Tories' 18-year reign. The Conservatives' aim is to get the basic rate down to 20p.

The Government also managed to spring a surprise with the pledge of a £1.2 billion tax break for 1.8 million married couples with children or dependent relatives. The tax break will be worth on average £700 per family and will allow married couples where one spouse does not work or earns less than his or her personal allowance to transfer some or part of his or her tax-free allowance to the working spouse.

But while the two main parties have pledged not to raise headline rates they have been more vague about indirect taxes. Changes to capital gains tax, mortgage interest relief, personal allowances and windfall taxes can make a significant difference to the disposable income of savers and borrowers.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, has refused to match Labour's commitment to rule out the extension of VAT to food, children's clothes, books, newspapers or transport. Labour, however, has been vague about the new "individual savings account" it plans to introduce. It says only that it will "review the corporate and capital gains tax regimes to see how the tax system can promote greater long-term investment". But it has pledged to reduce VAT on fuel to 5 per cent.

The Liberal Democrats have taken a different tack on direct tax rates. Paddy Ashdown, the party leader, has taken the controversial step of promising to put a penny on income tax to pay for improved education.

But if, as the Tories insist, political parties should be judged on their record, there could be a salutary lesson to be learnt from the tax policies of the past. Price Waterhouse's survey for *The Times* tells the real story of income tax under Labour and Conservative Governments of the past 30 years. Taking into account factors such as personal allowances, the survey shows how two families of four on different income levels would have fared. A family on average earnings under Harold Wilson's Government in 1967 lost 9.9 per cent of the breadwinner's salary in income tax. The same family today loses 16.3 per cent — an overall rise of 6.4 per cent.

For a family on three times' average earnings there has also been an increase over the period. In 1967 this family lost 24.7 per cent of its income in direct tax, whereas today the figure is 28.1 per cent — an overall 3.4 per cent extra to the Inland Revenue. Although the Conservative Party faithful can point out that the basic headline rate of income tax has been cut from 33 per cent to 23 per cent, a look behind the headlines tells quite a different story.

John Major may claim that his is the party of tax cuts, but Price Waterhouse's analysis of income tax since the last change of administration in 1979 demonstrates that the real reduction for a family with average earnings has been just 2 per cent.

The fall has been from an 18.3 per cent tax under James Callaghan to 16.3 per cent today. The higher-earning family has received a more substantial cut from 34.8 per cent to 28.1 per cent, though this needs to be balanced against increases in indirect taxes.

But, for those on their way to the ballot box, the story of Labour's effect on income tax could cause greater jitters. When Harold Wilson's Labour Party swept to power in 1964 after 13 years of Tory rule, one of the first actions of his Chancellor, James Callaghan, was to raise the standard rate of income tax by 6d (2.5p). And in 1974 another Labour election victory was followed by a 3p rise in all income tax rates.

Our survey shows that between 1974 and 1977 Labour consistently raised direct tax levels. The burden on a family earning three times the average was pushed from 24 per cent to its highest ever at 34.8 per cent. More surprisingly, the family on average earnings also lost out under Chancellor Denis Healey. By 1979 he had raised their income tax outlay to 18.5 per cent, another all-time high.

The spectre of the Healey years, with their high income tax, high inflation and the humiliation of IMF intervention, may well haunt Tony Blair as the country gears up for polling day. But according to John Whiting, head of personal tax at Price Waterhouse, using your vote to prevent tax rises is likely to be difficult.

"Our survey shows that income tax has risen over the past 30 years, particularly for those on average earnings, and general taxation has risen even further," he said. "Whichever party wins the election, it will struggle to restrict this trend, and the most voters can hope for is some degree of choice in how the extra taxes will be levied."

WEEKEND MONEY
is edited by Anne Ashworth

HOW THE PARTY PROMISES COMPARE

THE CONSERVATIVES

■ **Tax and saving.** Aim to cut basic rate of tax to 20p over the next Parliament and maintain maximum tax rate of 40p. Ability to transfer personal allowances between married couples looking after dependent children. Inheritance tax threshold to be raised "when prudent to do so". Development of existing tax breaks on Peps and Tessas. Expansion of employee share ownership, including a new Share Match Scheme giving employees free shares if they take a stake in their company.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Radical revamp of the state pension system, transferring the next generation of contributions into private plans. Contributions to be made out of taxed income, but pensions to be received tax free. Easier setting up of group personal pensions for small businesses. More flexibility for people to continue to contribute to personal pensions after moving to jobs with company schemes. Long-term care costs to be funded by private insurance in return for more family retention of assets.

LABOUR

■ ***Tax and saving.*** No increase in basic or top tax rates. Long-term objective to cut the starting rate of tax to 10p. VAT on fuel cut to 5 per cent. Further linking of the tax and benefit systems. New individual savings account and extension of Peps and Tessas. Review of capital gains tax system. Further encouragement of employee share ownership plans.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Basic state pension to be retained and increased in line with prices. Second-tier stakeholder pensions invested in private pension plans for non-members of company schemes. A new "citizenship" pension for carers. Tighter regulation of personal pensions with reform of the Financial Services Act. Implementation of pension splitting on divorce. Establishment of a royal commission on long-term care funding.

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

■ **Tax and saving.** An income tax rate of 50 per cent for those who earn more than £100,000, and an extra 1p on the basic rate of tax, bringing it to 24p. An increase in the personal tax allowance by £200. The party has no plans to change inheritance tax or capital gains tax rates. It intends to maintain tax exempt special savings accounts and personal equity plans, and plans the introduction of a save-as-you-earn scheme.

■ **Pensions and long-term care.** Encouragement of personal pensions, portable pensions and long-term care provisions. Reinforcement of consumer and investor protection, alongside independent regulation.

SARA McCONNELL, CAROLINE MERRELL

Dividends are in danger

PERSONAL INVESTOR

GRAHAM SEARJEANT

Millions of small investors who are retired or have been cast on to the economic scrapheap depend on dividends to pay their bills. Fortunately, this half-yearly income has, on average, risen faster than prices; faster even than company earnings of late. That has cushioned many a household budget against the collapse of interest rates, which hit those who depend on savings. Few others cared much; lower interest rates being assumed by the borrowing classes to be an unalloyed social good. Uncaring forces are now gathering to attack dividends.

One advance party is the board of LucasVarity, the recently merged mid-Atlantic engineering group. It has quietly been canvassing City investors on the idea of abolishing UK-style dividends for a US-style programme of share buybacks. Peculiar circumstances make this more tax efficient for LucasVarity than for most companies. Even so, its shares have been weak of late.

Investors willingly forego income from a company that is in the development stage or growing so fast that it needs all the cash it can muster to invest. More mature companies, including LucasVarity, should deliver a regular return on money invested in them.

Share buybacks are not suitable for regular distributions. If all shareholders are included, as in the one-off arrangement at Iceland Group, it is too expensive. If a company just buys from institutions in the market, it is even more inequitable than buybacks by companies that do pay normal dividends. But it is convenient for managements. Buybacks cut equity capital, can thereby cut the average cost of capital and therefore help managers to raise and manipulate earnings per share.

The increase in risk this brings may well be worthwhile, but does not show up so clearly. One risk is that shareholders have all their eggs in one basket: the market value of the company's shares. The benefits may well be lost in market fluctuations because the anchor of an annual cash dividend yield is lost.

Ideally, larger companies' capital might be split into different vehicles to suit different investors' preferences for income, capital growth or safety. After some early successes, however, experiments in split-capital investment trusts suggest this rarely works well. If LucasVarity did leave the dividend lists, it would not be followed by many others.

A wider threat is the fashionable argument that high dividends reflect a short-term City view and are depriving the economy of investment in growth. This reasoning has always appealed to Labour. It led to a costly mistake in 1965, when taxes designed to discourage dividends instead slashed ploughed-back profits.

The temptation will be great to raise vast sums by axeing dividend tax relief for pension funds, blaming it for a "bias" in favour of dividends. This could also backfire. In any case, dividends are likely to become politically incorrect. What a pity. Dividends are higher and capital investment lower in Britain than in most countries, but annual dividends do not crowd out investment. The spate of share buybacks and one-off special dividends shows that finance directors are anxious to borrow more.

Investment is low because excessively high returns are demanded, because so many groups have cut back operations and retreated from peripheral businesses. After many bad experiences, companies with strong cashflow are now discouraged from diversifying. They should pay out heavily so that investors can recyle profits into new ventures.

That process is still not working well enough. But any attack on dividends would make things worse. Without a solid anchor of rising dividends, the market focus on stability and guaranteed growth in earnings per share would be even more intense and relentless. That would stop even more boards from taking long-term risks on expansion and propel even more to take the safer route of buying up a few more competitors. Dividends are healthy for all.

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Gavin Lumsden examines how new legislation will affect you and your workplace

Pension police switch to Opra beat

On November 5, 1991, the body of Robert Maxwell was found floating in the sea. His death sparked off an investigation that led to the discovery of Britain's biggest pension scandal. More than 14,000 pensioners saw their income dry up as a £400 million black hole was uncovered in company pension schemes in his empire. It took more than three years for the City firms implicated in the scandal finally to cough up £276 million to guarantee these pensions.

Pensioners such as Anthony Pearman, a former pilot with Maxwell-owned British International Helicopters, and his wife, Gill, had to subsist on a state pension for years and never recovered their full entitlement.

Tomorrow sees the overdue reaction to this debacle. Under the Pensions Act 1995 the UK's 200,000 occupational pension schemes come under statutory control for the first time. These schemes hold £600 billion of assets — equivalent to 75 per cent of the UK's GDP.

Ironically, the new rules follow recent government proposals for the wholesale reform of pension provision that could ring the death knell for occupational schemes. Stretching to 1,000 pages of dense legalese, the Act's objective of restoring public confidence in company pension schemes is nevertheless laudable.

Yet sceptics argue that it is fundamentally flawed. Doug Johnstone, managing director of Johnstone Douglas, the employee benefit consultancy, said: "The bank that can't be robbed hasn't been invented. A skilled and determined robber will always be able to get past any laws you set."

Caroline Johnston, chief executive of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (Opra), the new watchdog, said: "We have a police force, but there is still crime. What the Act does is introduce more checks and balances to ensure the average scheme is run more effectively. What is also important is that in Opra it provides a place for people to report to if they think there is something wrong with their scheme."

Opra will have the power to conduct searches, start criminal prosecutions and levy fines on firms and individuals that breach its rules.

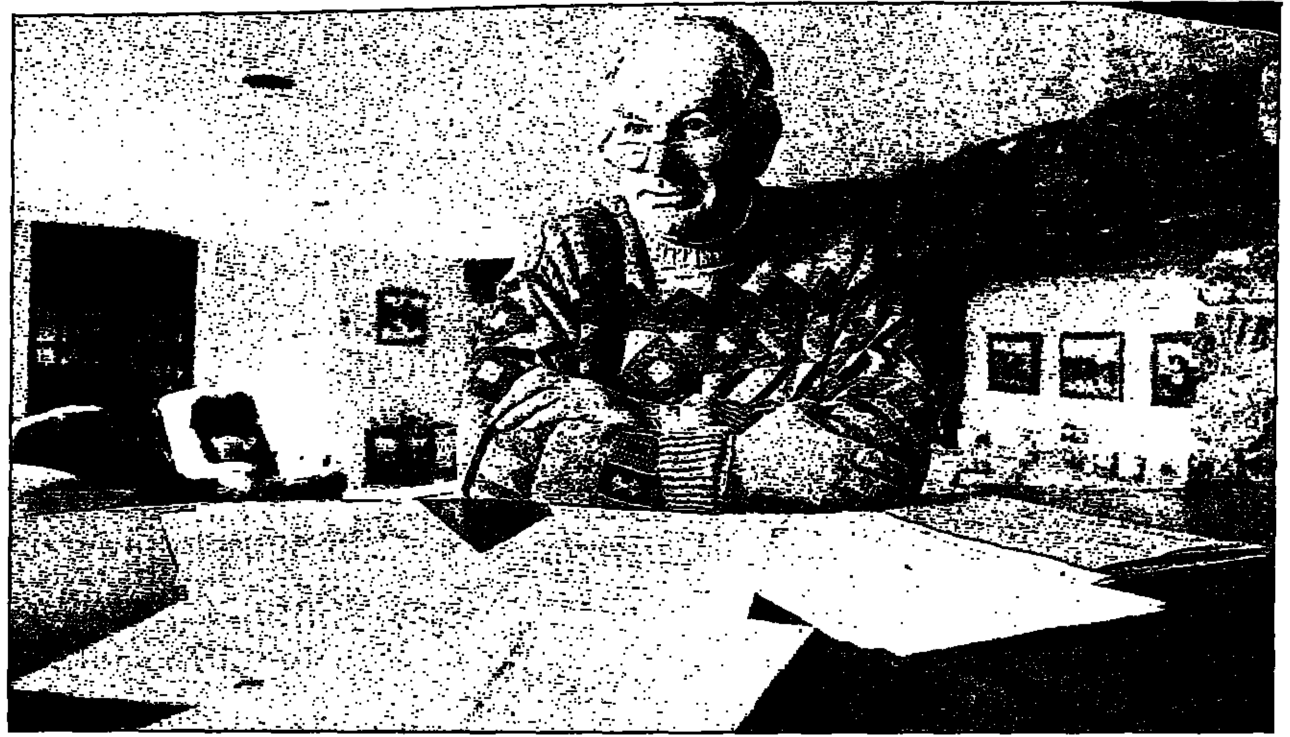
In particular it will punish firms that take contributions from employees' salaries and fail to put the money in the pension fund within 19 days. To delay will be to have committed a crime. One of the worst features of the Robert Maxwell scandal was the ease with which he diverted pension funds to support his ailing empire. In addition the Act obliges pension scheme advisers to blow the whistle when they find anything wrong. Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the Robert Maxwell affair was the way he rode roughshod over the established rules of consulting pension fund advisers, such as trustees. To prevent this the Act spells out that the duty of trustees is to the scheme and not to the employer.

Under Opra rules trustees are responsible for appointing advisers. They must also set out a statement of investment principles outlining the risk at which members' money will be put. Another crucial aim of the new Act is to increase employees' knowledge of their schemes. Under Opra, employers must give new members details of the scheme within two months of joining. The Act also gives members the right to appoint at least a third of their trustees from the workforce. Although many companies have gained their members' approval to opt out of this system, thousands of member-nominated trustees will this weekend be wrestling with their new responsibilities. Hugh Arthur, head of pensions at Biddle & Co, the legal firm, said: "Most company schemes already have strong member representation. The Act covers firms where there is none."

If members feel they have a grievance they must first go through the scheme's complaints procedure before contacting the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service. This is funded by Opra but manned by volunteers. If you are still not satisified, your last resort is Julian Farrand, the Pensions Ombudsman.

Unfortunately, although the Act has strong anti-fraud measures, it will be less effective if companies go bankrupt and pension schemes are forced to wind up. The Act lays down a minimum funding requirement (MFR) that insists all occupational pension schemes work towards establishing permanent reserves that could pay off its liabilities immediately if needed. However, John Shuttleworth, of Coopers & Lybrand, believes the Government has set a dangerously low MFR, partly because so few companies do actually go belly-up.

For a free guide to the Act call the Opra help-desk on 01273 627600. The National Association of Pension Funds has a series of 14 booklets at £10 each. Call 0171-259 9767.


MARC HILL

Anthony Pearman, a former pilot who has a reduced pension, suffered because of the Robert Maxwell scandal

Pensions reclaim Clarke's 1p tax present

Governments give with one hand and take with the other. From tomorrow the basic rate of tax falls 1p to 23p, as the Chancellor promised in last November's Budget. While this is good news for your wallet it will cut the amount of tax relief you get on pension contributions. Not only could this wipe out any benefit from the tax cut, it could leave you worse off in retirement if less money goes into your pension fund.

Governments offer basic tax relief on pension contributions to encourage people to put money aside for retirement. In the current financial year, which is about to end, the basic tax was 24p, as was relief on payments into pension plans.

This meant if you wanted to pay a net monthly premium of £100 into your pension you had to pay only £76 and the Government made up the difference. From next week you will have to pay £1 more to keep your pension on track. This may not sound much but has a cumulative effect, particularly as this is the second cut in two years — in 199[illegible] pensions tax relief was 25p.

If you are a member of an occupational scheme, check your payslip for any change in the amount going into your pension. If you are an employee with a personal pension you probably pay into the plan by direct debit. Under the banks' clearing system rules, pension companies should contact you before raising your payment. If you pay by standing order, contact the company if you have not heard from it.

If self-employed, you will pay gross into your personal pension and reclaim the tax from the Revenue. From next week you will get back £1 less for every £100 contributed.

It will still be possible to exploit this year's rate of relief in future. If your salary rises or you inherit a lump sum you can "carry back" contributions to previous tax years so long as you do not exceed the maximum (if you are under 35 it is 17.5 per cent of your wage). The amount you carry back will get the appropriate tax relief for that year: 24p for 1996-97, 25p for 1995-96.

GAVIN LUMSDEN

The key to unlocking cash set aside for retirement

Sara McConnell looks into a scheme for changing pensions to lump sums

People aged 50 and over with pension benefits frozen in schemes of former employers are being encouraged to transfer the funds to personal pensions and draw them immediately to unlock cash sums. But experts warn those tempted to cash in their pension early that they risk an impoverished retirement. Those who are, however, desperate enough for cash to contemplate such a step will almost certainly be able to get at their money without buying an expensive personal pension.

Inducements to transfer money from employers' pension funds are bound to rekindle fears of potential mis-selling of personal pensions. Hundreds of thousands of people who were wrongly advised to transfer from company schemes into personal pensions in the late 1980s are still waiting for compensation from insurance companies to make up benefits that they have lost from their employers. But in spite of the long-running mis-selling scandal, regulators have not outlawed transfers to personal pensions, relying on tighter monitoring of salesmen.

Regal Partners Financial Planning, a financial adviser, has placed advertisements in the national press saying: "Release your pension! Is your pension locked? Are you aged 50 or over and not receiving your pension? You could receive a cash sum now! We hold the key!" The "key", according to Regal, is that holders of personal pensions are allowed to take their pensions any time after 50, while most employers' schemes have a retirement age of 60 or 65. Moving funds into a personal pension and taking the pension immediately gives access to a tax-free lump sum of a quarter of the fund.

The remainder stays invested, with income from it "drawn down" to provide extra cash. Paul Smith of Regal said most of the takers for the scheme would be people who need quick cash. "It's for people who are about to have their homes repossessed or who need money for a new business venture."

Releasing a pension fund in this way is perfectly legal. But it could all too easily leave you impoverished, according to Billy Burrows, of Annuity Direct, the independent adviser and annuity expert. He said: "Pensions should be used to provide a pension and people have to understand that if they take the money now, they can't take it again."

Taking a frozen pension early also drastically reduces its value, said Geoffrey Wilson, partner of Excalibur Actuaries. He has calculated that a 50-year-old with a frozen pension of £5,000 a year in a scheme with a retirement age of 65 could lose up to four fifths of its value if he or she took the pension at 50. Poor annuity rates for younger people, and loss of investment growth and index linking reduce the value of the pension. Some employers will reduce the frozen pension before they transfer it.

But Mr Wilson's calculation does not take account of the often high costs of transferring the funds into a personal pension. He says it is unnecessary and probably more expensive for people wanting to cash in their pensions to use the "key" of a personal pension. "You just need to ask the scheme trustees if you can take your pension early. Company pension schemes typically offer retirement pensions reduced by 4-6 per cent a year for each year early."

Anyone who does transfer into a personal pension and is offered the option of "income drawdown" rather than buying an annuity should have a pension fund of at least £100,000 to reduce the risk of the capital out of which income is drawn becoming dangerously eroded, Mr Wilson said.

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Accountants tot up Revenue boost

COMMENT

MARIANNE CURPHEY
Deputy Personal Finance Editor

Over the past year, while advisers and PR people have groomed politicians for the election, spin-doctors have also been hard at work at the Inland Revenue, turning the image of the taxman from a bogeyman to a cheeky bowler-hatted chappie.

But this friendly cartoon character has better news for accountants than for the nine million people affected by self-assessment. No amount of gloss and good looks can disguise the fact that calculating your own tax bill will be time-consuming and, for many, daunting. Thousands of people are likely to turn to the professionals for help at a cost of between £50 to £500 per case.

Caught between spending hours poring over documents or finding an extra £100 to pay a professional to do it, they are likely to do the latter.

With demand for such services likely to double this year, the least accountants can do is pop some flowers and chocolates in the post to the Revenue as a mark of appreciation for the new business this tax reform will create.

Meanwhile, most people already feel they pay too much tax. Hence the two main political parties have stepped daintily around the issue of taxation as they launched their manifestos this week.

Behind the attempts by both Labour and the Conservatives to project themselves as the parties of low taxation lies a different story. As a survey carried out for *The Times* by Price Waterhouse shows, both have presided over rises in direct taxation over the past 30 years, and indirect taxes such as VAT have as great an effect on spending power.

Poor swap

MEMBERS of the Alliance & Leicester have less than a week to decide what to do with their windfall shares. While they deliberate, companies which provide Peps are gearing up to accept the converting building society's shares.

As we warn readers on page 36, investors could be persuaded to swap their shares for units in a general Pep, since some Pep providers are technically forbidden from managing direct equities.

Those who do accept small bundles of shares may increase management charges in the future to recoup the cost of administering thousands of small holdings.

Swapping windfall shares for units may not be in the interest of small investors because there will be demand for shares from institutions, and converting societies have long-term growth potential.

Investors should bear in mind that high management charges could outweigh the tax advantages of a Pep.

MARTIN BEDDALL

They're off: marathon runners face just one day of pain while many taxpayers could be filling in their own returns for the rest of their lives

Starter's orders for the tax marathon

Next week eight million taxpayers will receive a thick envelope from the Inland Revenue containing their first self-assessment tax return, for the 1996-97 tax year. Its arrival will mark the start of the biggest upheaval of the tax system since PAYE began in 1943.

Taxpayers who have to fill in returns have two choices. They can work out their tax bill and send the Revenue a cheque or ask the Revenue to do the sums after giving figures for earnings and other income and benefits. There will be strict deadlines for completing forms and a new system of fixed and daily penalties for failing to respond on time.

The new style tax return consists of a series of boxes to be ticked and completed. The envelope should contain:

- A core eight-page return. On this you give information on your earnings and other simple income from building society and bank deposit accounts, unit trusts or shares.
- Additional schedules. You will be sent these if you have more complicated tax affairs, for example, letting property, or running a business. You will have to fill in these as well as the core return. The Revenue will send you the schedules it thinks you need, using its existing knowledge of your affairs. There is a checklist on page 2 of the core return showing the different schedules, and an orderline (0645 000404) to request any extras.
- A guide to filling in your tax return. If you ask for extra schedules you will also receive extra guides to cover them.
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Once you get your return, you have until September 30 to complete the forms, if you want the Revenue to work out your tax. You will have until January 31, 1998, if you prefer to work out your own. Between now and the deadline, you will have to collect paperwork from different sources to complete the form. You will not actually have to send off the papers but must keep them for 22 months after filing the return in case the Revenue wants to check them. About 7,500 people a year will be checked at random.

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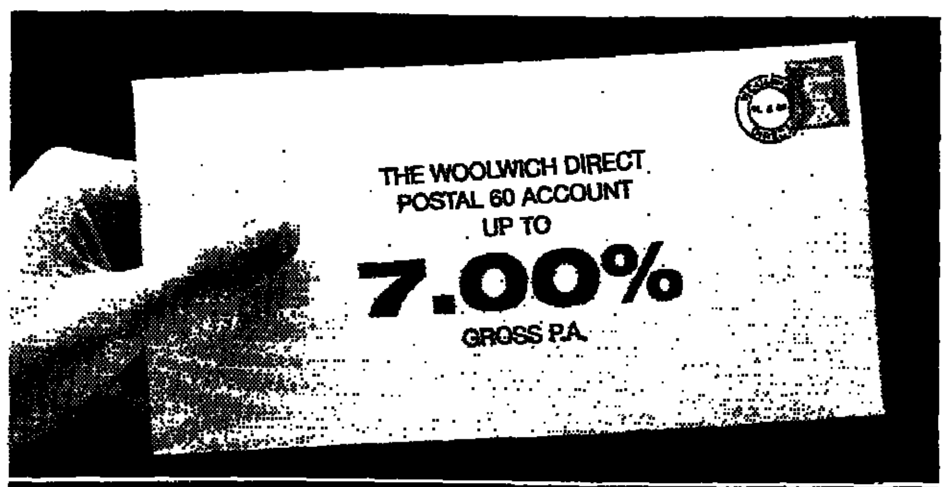

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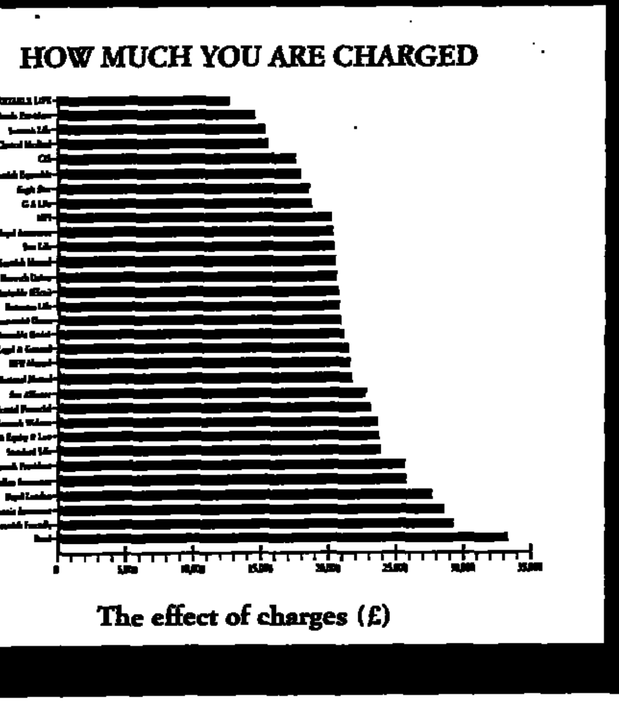

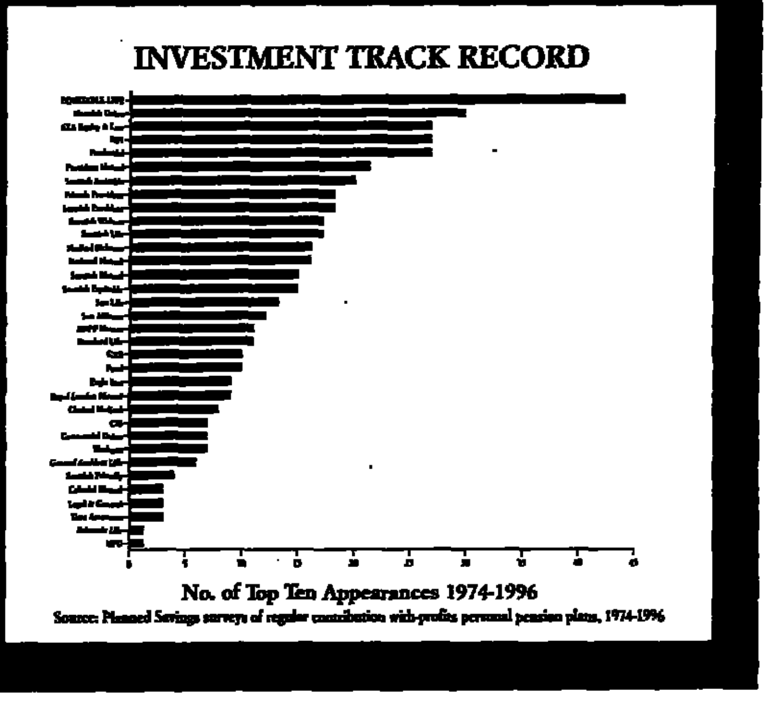

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Nathan Yates finds plastic paybacks increasingly attractive

Issuers scramble for credit card customers

ALAN LEWIS

Les McKeown has had the air tickets to prove that a quarter of a million loyalty points were more than just a gimmick

In an increasingly cut-throat card market, loyalty is at a premium, and issuers are increasingly ready to pay bonuses in the scramble to keep customers. Bank of England figures released this week show that high credit card use pushed net consumer borrowing to a record £1.22 billion in February. The month saw a 17.5 per cent rise in net consumer credit, the fastest since May 1989.

One beneficiary of the war among credit card companies for this spending bonanza is Les McKeown, a Belfast art gallery owner. He said: “I thought loyalty points were just a gimmick, so I never kept track of my American Express Rewards. But then I needed to send a team out to set up our new gallery in San Francisco. I had over a quarter of a million Rewards points by then, and I was delighted to find out that was enough to pay for their trip.”

A report by Professor Steve Worthington of Stafford University shows in terms of total financial gain the best scheme is provided by Bradford & Bingley Building Society. On its Visa/Mastercard you receive a 4 per cent return on all your spending. For £10,000 spent, this adds up to a £400 payback.

With Bradford & Bingley's card the money must go towards paying off your mortgage, and you are only eligible for this reward if Bradford & Bingley is your lender. For those who prefer to buy a car rather than a house, the GM card offers the next best rate of return. Here you receive 3 per cent of your spending, and after buying £10,000 worth of goods you would accumulate £300 towards a new Vauxhall car.

If you need neither a car nor a house, the most profitable option is American Express. Its Rewards system offers between 2 per cent and 2.7 per cent of money returned, to be spent in a variety of ways. Possible purchases range from flights to meals out, and one cardholder even paid for his entire honeymoon with Rewards points last month.

NatWest Bank's Visa/Mastercard offers between 0.6 and 2.5 per cent money back, which is the best loyalty scheme available from any high street bank. Its rewards are organised through Air Miles, one of the oldest loyalty systems.

Air Miles used to be spent on British Airways flights, but the range of rewards on offer has been expanded to keep pace with the competition. Air Miles can now bring you more diverse benefits, from days out with selected travel companies to hotel bookings. Perhaps their most unusual offer is a discount on white water rafting.

The Texaco Global Visa card reimburses its holders between 1 and 1.1 per cent of their spending through vouchers that are valid at a variety of stores from Burton's clothes shops to Pizza Hut. After spending £10,000 on this card you will receive vouchers worth £110. The Goldfish card and the Alliance & Leicester Money Back card both offer a 1 per cent return on your expenditure, and a choice between these will depend on how you like your payment.

With the Goldfish card you will receive a discount on your British Gas bill or on shopping at Boots or Asda. With the Money Back card you will get your reward in straightforward cash, and Alliance & Leicester is the only company offering this direct benefit.

As well as the loyalty returns available on credit cards, there is also a range of non-payment schemes available from stores. UK citizens now carry 27 million supermarket loyalty cards in their wallets, an increase of more than 25 per cent in recent months.

One advantage of these cards is that they offer the opportunity to “double dip” into the rewards system. When buying your groceries, for example, you can use a Sainsbury Reward card to obtain a future food bill discount and at the same time you can make the purchase with American Express and add to your Rewards points tally.

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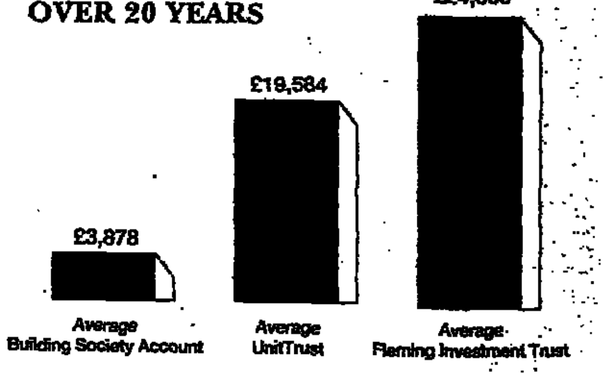

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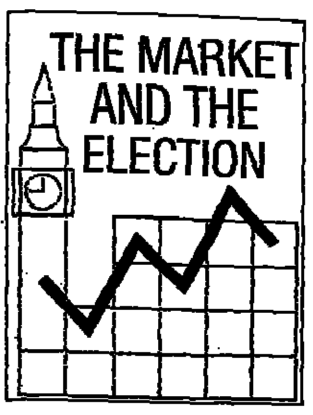
Matthew Wall finds few worries among businessmen ahead of the election

A blip on the City's charts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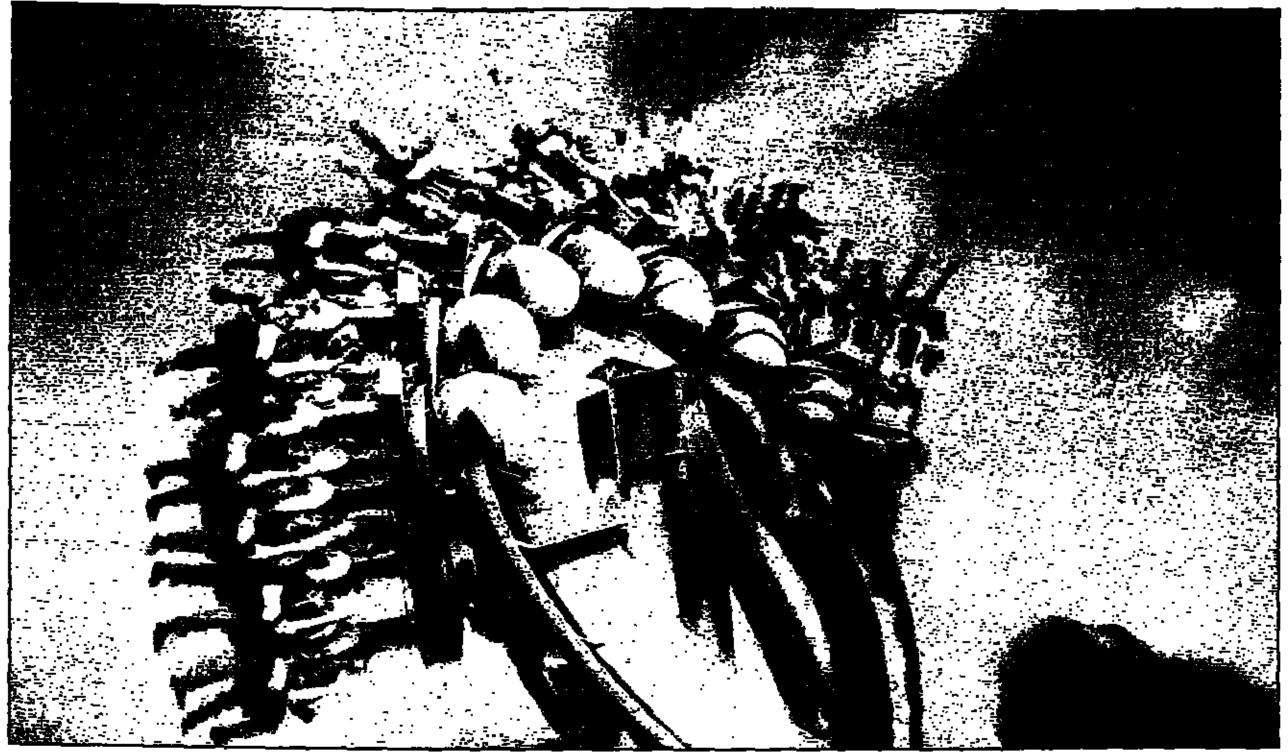
Hold on tight: investors should prepare themselves for a bumpy ride on the markets in the run-up to the election

The message to investors this week, as skittishness on Wall Street took its toll on the UK stock market and the political parties unveiled their election manifestos to mixed reactions: "Please fasten your seatbelts as we will be encountering some turbulence".

The Dow Jones industrial average, the most commonly quoted US performance index, continued its slide amid fears that the Federal Reserve's quarter percentage point rise in the key US short-term interest rate last week would not be the last. Consequently the UK's FT-SE 100 index, which ended last week at 4,312.9, fell again and ended the week at around 4,237.

The Easter break exacerbated UK share price volatility as fund managers extended their holidays. Thin trading volume meant that fewer transactions had a greater effect on prices and this increased volatility added to the impression of nervousness and uncertainty in the run-up to the election.

But John Hatherley, head of research at M&G, the second largest unit trust provider with £16 billion under management, says there is actually a feeling of calm in the City.

"The market does not regard the Tory manifesto with anything more than academic interest. We've had a Labour lead of about 20 per cent since Black Wednesday in September 1992 and fund managers have been conditioned to a Labour victory for some time," he said.

"Indeed, the market began the year very strongly despite Labour's lead in the polls. This election campaign is absolutely irrelevant to our asset allocations."

And one head of trading at a leading City brokerage said: "The markets will remain fragile for the next couple of months and will become more and more volatile the closer we get to the election. But the long-term trend is upwards.

"Our view is that people shouldn't panic. Things are going to plan. The economic fundamentals look good in the medium term. As long as inflation is kept at a modest level and US interest rates do not continue to rise, then things should be OK.'

It seems that Labour's front bench Treasury team has successfully convinced the City that a change of government poses little threat to the market economy.

But concerns remain over Labour's lack of experience in office and the absence of specific policy detail. Despite such concerns, the last thing the City wants is the uncertainty of a small Labour majority or a hung Parliament. HSBC James Capel, stockbrokers, is predicting a 140-seat majority for Labour and 4.25 per cent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) this year. Keith Skeoch, its chief economist, says: "Our GDP growth is at the upper end of expectations, but we believe the demutualisation of the building societies will give a further boost to the consumer-led recovery.

"We expect that a quarter of the £22 billion being raised will be spent by consumers. Given the net improvement in personal sector finances, coupled with improvement in the housing market, the economy looks to be in good shape. As a result there is a distinct switch in the market from financial stocks to consumer stocks."

This view is supported by record consumer borrowing figures issued this week. Net consumer borrowing exceeded £1.2 billion in February, boosted by vigorous credit card borrowing.

And the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) reported improved retail sales volume growth for the year to March 1997, with a balance of 33 per cent of retailers enjoying growth compared with 27 per cent for the same period last year.

Such strong figures make interest rate rises even more likely after the election, as the new government battles to keep inflation at its 2.5 per cent target level. However, the CBI does not believe there is a danger of the economy slipping back into the boom-bust cycle, last seen in the late Eighties and early Nineties, as some fear.

A new Chancellor will be faced with the problem of raising interest rates just enough to convince the bond markets that inflation is under control, but not so much that the markets would fear a slowdown in economic recovery.

While the politicians battle it out over the coming weeks, they will undoubtedly forget that the UK market is a mere bit-part player in the global economy, blown here and there by the vicissitudes of other more influential markets.

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Bull looks like finally running out of steam

At last it seems to be happening. After six years of its record-breaking bull run, the stock market has flown too close to the sun and is falling fast. What makes this different from previous setbacks, such as last summer, is that the mood of investors is changing and that could have some unpredictable effects. The Dow Jones industrial average in New York has plunged more than 8 per cent since its March peak of just over 7,000.

Since the end of last week it has dropped more than 360 points, bringing it close to where it began the year. This is not yet on a par with the 1987 crash when the Dow collapsed 22.6 per cent, but it is close to the 10 per cent fall that would officially end the bull phase.

Wall Street analysts who until a few weeks ago were still bullish have abruptly turned gloomy. "The market is headed lower in the next few weeks," says Tom McManus, equity strategist at NatWest Markets in New York.

Most professional investors seem to agree. The Federal Reserve Board put interest rates up 0.25 per cent a week ago and many experts expect two or three further rises as the authorities try to choke off incipient inflation in an economy that remains stubbornly strong. Higher interest rates are likely to mean weaker corporate profits, and the spate of first-quarter company results due over the next few weeks is expected to be disappointing, pushing share prices down further.

The big worry is what small investors will do. They have poured cash into the market in the past two years. Already, the average mutual fund (the US equivalent of unit trusts) is losing money this year. If the market falls further, losses could become large enough to prompt a wholesale flight from equities by individual investors. If that happens, the market will be in trouble, so everyone is watching mutual fund cashflows like a hawk.

On the plus side there has been little sign of panic despite the wild price swings of the past week. More money is moving into cash, such as money market funds, but it has not yet become a flood. The best strategy for anyone watching the US is probably to wait but keep your finger on the button. If the market falls much beyond 10 per cent in the next few days, it may be wise to get out fast because the fall could become a panic.

It is more likely that the market will stabilise and eventually start to move ahead again. The US economy is, after all, fundamentally strong. Corporate profits may fall, but companies are still generally healthy. There is, in short, no good reason for the market to crash or even decline much further than it has already.

RICHARD THOMPSON

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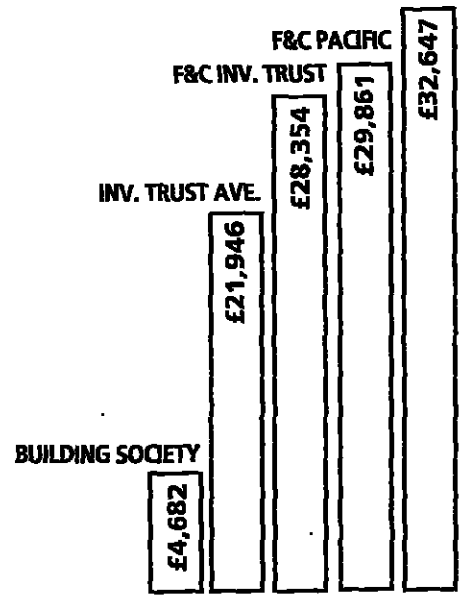

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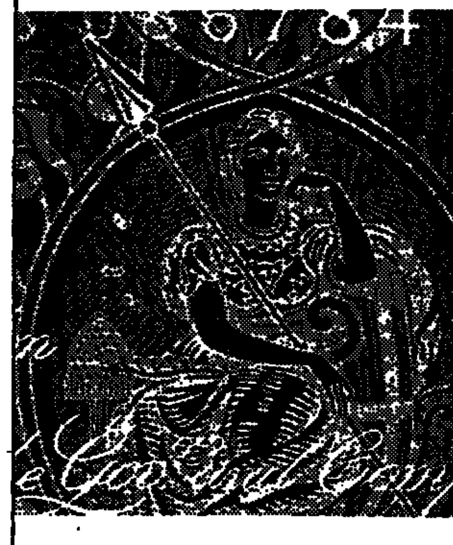

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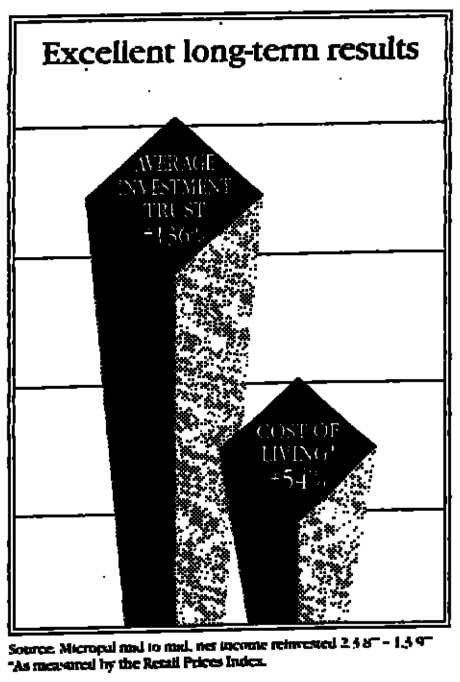

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GOVETT
Investment

Karen Zagor on the attempts to keep society members sweet

What price loyalty now?

Loyalty may be a precious commodity in the business world, but some building society members feel the rewards for fidelity are meagre.

David Elam, a freelance advertising creative director, has been involved with the Britannia for more than 20 years. Although he no longer has a mortgage with the society, he does have more than £10,000 in a savings account, thanks to the recent sale of a house. When the society announced how much it was distributing this year through its loyalty reward scheme, Mr Elam rang to find out how much he would get.

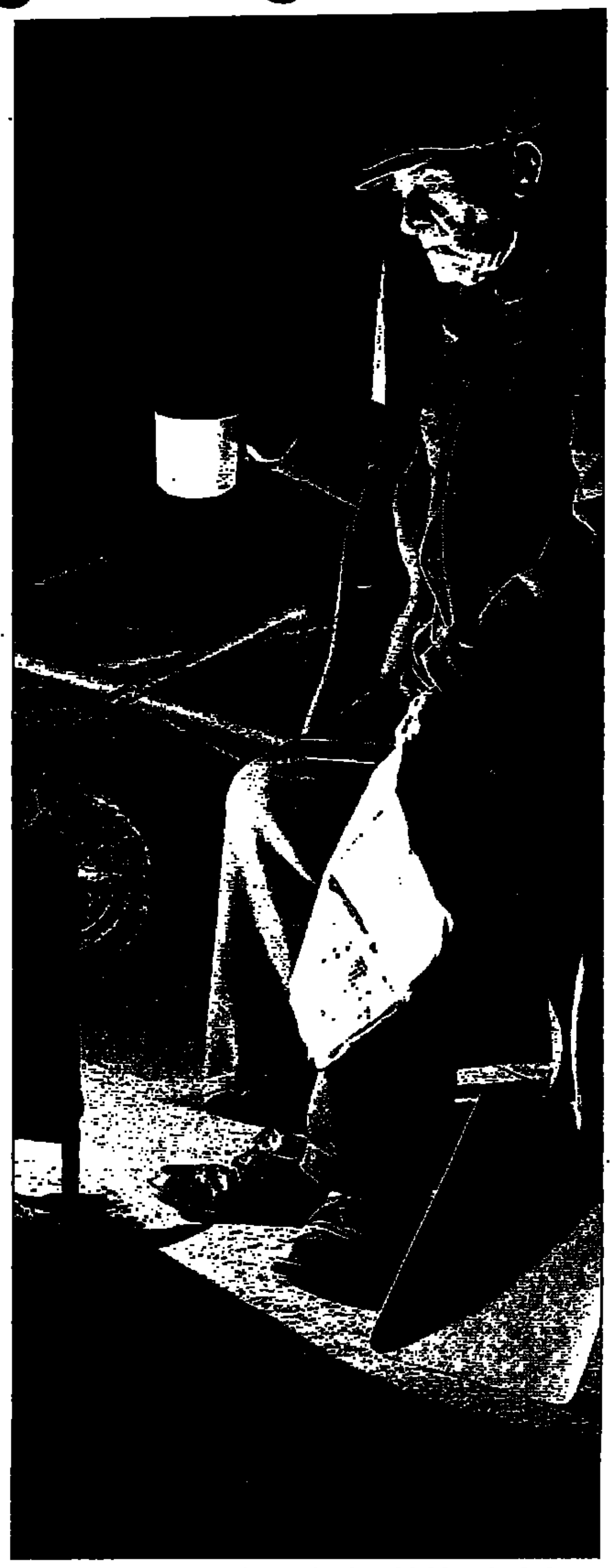
"There was huge hype surrounding the launch of the bonus and I expected to be bowled over, but when I asked how much the loyalty bonus was, I was told I would get only £24.37," he said. "I was underwhelmed."

Mr Elam also notes that the loyalty bonus is capped on savings of more than £20,000. "This seems rather at odds with the chairman's statement that the scheme takes into account the size of people's financial commitment. It's not that I'm money-grabbing, but I felt that promises were broken. And I wonder what it cost them in clerical terms to give me £24.37."

However, Mr Elam is unlikely to be the only disappointed Britannia member. When the society announced details of its scheme last year, it predicted average payments of £40 for the first year, which is not exactly the type of figure to win over the hearts and minds of members. In the end, the payout was even less generous, with average payments of only £35. The maximum payout was £500.

The Britannia was one of a large number of building societies forced to pass on profits to members to prove that mutuality was worthwhile after last year's glut of mergers and conversions, which left hundreds of thousands of society members richer through large one-off payments.

Nicki Lundy, a Britannia spokeswoman, says: "The bonus was never intended to compete with the windfall payments. We launched it to restate that we are a mutual society and that we want to give something back to our customers. It's not a one-off payment, and it can increase as customers take out more products or increase their tenure. We give back about one third of our business to members, and as our profits grow the real value of that bonus will grow."



Night watchman: loyalty used to be a highly prized virtue

The Britannia's scheme is based on a points system, where points are allocated for tenure and the amount of money borrowed or saved with the society. Members then receive a lump sum. Mr Elam does not feel the loyalty rewards are sufficient to compensate for the fact that he is getting only 5.50 per cent for the money in his Capital Trust postal account.

Mr Elam may be relieved to know that the society is lifting its savings rates on Monday, when amounts of more than £5,000 in a Capital Trust account will get annual interest of 5.6 per cent, or 5.35 per cent for monthly interest.

In contrast, research by *MoneyFacts* shows that Northern Rock is paying 6.65 per cent, with minimum withdrawals of £500, and the Coventry is paying 5.85 per cent on sums above £10,000. For instant access accounts, Bristol & West is paying 6.40 per cent. Alliance & Leicester is paying 6.05 per cent and even Sainsbury's is paying 5.75 per cent on accounts of more than £10,000.

Some societies have opted to reward members by cutting mortgage rates or lifting savings rates. In the long term, this may be the best way for societies to prove that mutuality is in the best interest of members. The Nationwide, for example, is giving back about half its profits to members through better savings and mortgage rates. Its standard variable mortgage rate now stands at 6.99 per cent.

The society estimates that a family with a £60,000 interest-only mortgage and £10,000 in an instant access account would be £235 better off than if they were with the Halifax, £315 better off than if they banked with NatWest and £250 better off than with Abbey National. A spokesman said: "We can continue to do this because we do not have shareholders to pay dividends to, and we have recommitted ourselves to return a similar amount next year."

Bradford & Bingley recently announced improvements to its initial loyalty package. It now plans to offer savers rates that are, on average, 0.5 percentage points higher than competitors'. Its standard variable mortgage rate is a competitive 6.99 per cent, and there are plans to offer even lower rates for longer-standing borrowers.

Others are also choosing to reward longstanding membership. The Coventry's standard variable mortgage rate is 7.25 per cent, but its Privilege Rate for borrowers of at least five years' standing is 6.5 per cent. National Counties' discount scheme starts with a mortgage discount of 0.40 percentage points for existing borrowers who have been with the society for three years or more. This is then increased by 0.05 percentage points each year for a maximum discount of 0.75 percentage points. In addition, the discounts are guaranteed for the life of the mortgage.

The Britannia notes that it gave away £6 million as a one-off mortgage discount to existing borrowers as part of its loyalty reward package. "We are not giving away more of our profits because we have no desire to weaken our financial strength. There has never been a collapse of a building society, unlike banks," a spokeswoman says.

However, Rob Thomas, building societies analyst for UBS, has estimated that societies could pass on two thirds of profits to members without harming their business. With this in mind, the Britannia and other societies have a way to go.

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Halifax woos its released investors

Halifax Building Society has launched a customer loyalty package aimed at trying to keep millions of pounds' worth of savings that have been locked in with the society since it announced its flotation plans more than two years ago.

The amount of shares each member received under the terms of the deal was related to the amount of money savers held with the society up until a certain date. Savers are now free to move their money to other societies that are offering more competitive rates of interest.

The loyalty package includes discounts on personal loans, special rates for existing mortgage customers moving home, up to £100 off credit card balances on transfer to Halifax Visa, holiday discounts and free financial advice.

To qualify for the range of benefits, customers need to have one or more of the following: a savings account, mortgage, salary-credited Halifax current account or shares.

The society is planning to mail its eight million customers with details of the new service. John Lee, group personnel and services director, said: "The purpose of the customer loyalty programme is to thank existing customers for their business and to provide added value."

Other societies in the process of floating are not planning to offer their customers the same sort of benefits.

CAROLINE MERRELL

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No home, but hit with £34,000 bill

The letter from Fairclough Homes two months ago came as a shock to Nick Chatten. The developer was demanding a payment of £34,000 to cover the remaining portion of the shared-equity mortgage Mr Chatten had taken out in 1990 to buy his one-bedroom flat on Fairclough's Claermont Heights estate in Colchester, Essex (Sara McConnell writes).

But Mr Chatten had had his home repossessed two years before by the Halifax Building Society, which had lent him 50 per cent of the £66,000 cost of the property. The society sold the flat for £28,500. Mr Chatten has no property and no equity to allow him to raise money to pay Fairclough the balance of the property's value, which it can lawfully demand. Next week he will face the developer in court.

He says: "The letter was a total shock. I thought, well, the property isn't there any more so it's basically a paper debt [to Fairclough]. But I'll go to court and tell the truth."

Mr Chatten claims that the shared equity contract was never fully explained to him. He said: "The whole thing was arranged to get us in as quickly as possible. I was very naive but I had already been gazumped once."

Fairclough declined to comment on individual cases. But it claims that "the last thing it wants to do is repossess anyone".

Mr Chatten believes he is the first to be taken to court by Fairclough for non-payment. But others may follow. Mr Chatten is just one of many at Claermont facing huge debts as Fairclough calls in payments for shared-equity mortgages. The developer offered the loans between 1989 and 1992 and growing numbers of residents can expect demands this year. But most have seen the value of their homes plummet and the equity, to allow them to borrow and pay off the debt, is minimal.

JOHN McLELLAN

Nick Chatten says his contract was never fully explained

Shared equity time bomb takes its toll

Growing numbers of borrowers who bought new homes at the end of the 1980s housing boom are facing demands for hundreds of thousands of pounds from developers who signed them up to "shared equity" mortgage deals. Some are trapped in their homes, unable to move until they have found the money. Others have received repossession notices.

Their plight is a grim reminder of the excesses of the overheated market of the 1980s, when people struggling to get on the housing ladder were tempted into schemes, the success of which depended on constantly rising prices.

Housing advisers and agents gave warning this week that the current recovery, particularly in London and the South East, could herald renewed efforts to develop such mortgage deals and called on buyers to remember the lessons of the housing boom.

At the beginning of the 1990s, developers targeted potential buyers who could not afford the whole cost of a home as prices peaked and interest rates rose. Such buyers took out loans for a proportion of the purchase, typically 50 per cent to 80 per cent, and undertook to pay the balance to the developer in five years in a shared equity or deferred arrangement.

The assumption was that house prices would continue to rise sharply over the five-year period, allowing borrowers to use their increased equity to take out a further loan to cover the rest of the purchase price.

However, the value of some of the properties has nearly halved and borrowers cannot pay the balance. In one case a couple on a Colchester estate who bought a flat valued at £72,000 with a £36,000 loan in 1991 now owe another £36,000 to Fairclough Homes, the developer. Their home is worth just £38,000.

Colchester Borough Council's housing advice unit reports a number of similar cases elsewhere on the same estate. Phil Harris, of the Housing Advice Unit, says: "These homes were built in the Colchester commuter belt when prices were really high in 1988-89. Prices were rising by about 20 per cent a year. Now they have fallen by about 35 per cent."

Neil Heward, of the Colchester Mortgage Centre, a local mortgage broker, says: "This scheme worked on two basic beliefs: one, that people would be able to afford a loan after five years that they could not afford at the beginning; and two, that prices would continue to increase."

Mr Heward says he refused to arrange loans for buyers who were signing up for the Fairclough shared equity schemes because he believed they were too risky.

Critics of shared equity schemes argue that lenders were prepared to advance shared equity mortgages because they believed they would not be overexposed, even if house prices fell. In many cases they were lending only 50 per cent of the property's value. But the Halifax, which was one of a number of lenders arranging mortgages for buyers in Colchester, said no one had foreseen the falls in prices.

Lenders have also consistently argued that they are only in the business of providing information and should not be held responsible for advice. Even now, the Council of Mortgage Lenders' code of conduct, which requires lenders to be responsible for their advice, does not yet cover intermediaries, including developers, who arrange loans.

Fairclough declined to comment specifically but repeated a statement made this week to BBC Radio 4's *You and Yours*: "We are fully aware of the difficulties being experienced by housebuyers ... and we are concerned to explore every possibility to find a solution acceptable to both the homeowners and ourselves."

Colchester and other parts of the South East saw some of the sharpest falls in house prices in the recession. Now London and the South East are experiencing the biggest rises, as they did in the 1980s.

The Nationwide Building Society's quarterly regional house price index, to be published next week, is expected to reveal that prices in London have risen by an average of 21 per cent in the last year. The outer metropolitan area has seen rises averaging 12 per cent, while prices in the South East have risen 9 per cent.

But apparently large rises disguise the fact that the recovery is patchy, according to Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy of the National Association of Estate Agents. "There have been spectacular rises, but some people are still having a problem selling," he said.

He warned buyers not to be tempted into mortgages which rely on large rises in prices, saying: "This is dangerous. People mustn't take out deferred schemes as a method of getting a deferred property. If you are near the mark for getting a loan you should think twice."

SARA MCCONNELL

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NU gears up for conversion

Norwich Union, the first mutual insurer to attempt a stock market flotation, is gearing up for the conversion vote on April 18. A total of 2.9 million members are being sent postal ballot slips, and the company is confident it will achieve the *75 per cent poll needed to approve* its switch to a plc.

As with building society flotations, Norwich Union's move offers the prospect of big financial benefits for members. If it is given the go-ahead, it will issue 1.3 billion free shares at between 220p and 265p. This means the average payout per member will reach £800, and those with higher value policies can expect more.

If you have a non-profit policy your free share allocation will be fixed at 150 shares. A with-profits policy will be worth 300 shares, and 57 per cent of members will receive more depending on their policy's value. NU also intends to offer members options for more shares at discount rates.

Provided its members opt for the incentives, the insurer plans to complete its flotation in June. But only members who held life insurance, pension or annuity policies on October 1 last year will receive shares. Those who are eligible will receive their payouts on time only if they reregister with the insurer before April 18. Policyholders can confirm membership by filling in their ballot forms, and even if you miss the registration deadline your assets will not be disposed of until 2006. But failing to register before the flotation would turn your shares into *capital gains in the Revenue's* eyes, leaving you vulnerable to CGT.

If the NU flotation move is accepted on April 18, members will be free to close their policies without jeopardising their payouts. But the durable nature of arrangements such as life insurance means that NU has an advantage over the demutualising building societies in keeping members.

Alliance & Leicester members due to receive shares are now free to move elsewhere, but those accepting cash must wait until April 21. Halifax savers must have at least £100 in their accounts until the conversion in June. Woolwich accounts should be kept open until flotation on July 7. Bristol & West members receiving the standard payout should retain a £100 balance until July 28. Those expecting the variable award should preserve their accounts unchanged. At Northern Rock the safest option is to keep at least £100 saved.

NATHAN YATES

Colonial names its price

Shares rush: the boys will be racing to fill their boots with Colonial shares closely followed by institutions

Colonial, the Australian financial services group, added to the free share mania this week with the announcement that 255,000 of its UK policy holders will get an average 1,000 shares and options to buy more, worth about £1,300, when it lists in May.

Although the company demutualised in December, this is the first time it has put a value on its shares. Under the distribution, 10 per cent of members will get a minimum of 225 shares worth £290, although there will be no upper limit. A further 90,000 holders of personal pensions will benefit indirectly via their trustees who will receive the shares on their behalf. However, the offer excludes about 80,000 people with unit trust and unit linked pensions.

Unfortunately, the shares will not be Pepable as Colonial is seeking a joint listing on the Australian and New Zealand stock exchanges. To be eligible for Peps, shares must be listed in the European Union. If you are a policyholder with Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society, you should have received a shareholder application form with allocation details yesterday. You have until May 2 to decide if you want to sell or keep the windfall. If you choose to sell, the company will cap dealing charges at 2 per cent to members.

You can top up your allocation to 500 shares and buy lots of 100 thereafter as 75 million new shares 77.5 million existing shares are being released to finance an Asian acquisition. Shares not snapped up in this offer will be made available to institutions. If the price falls below £1.30 Colonial will refund the difference to members.

However, Colonial warned UK policyholders that holding foreign shares is more complicated than holding British shares. Retaining Colonial shares will involve some foreign exchange risk. *The shares will be denominated in Australian dollars.* If it falls against sterling, the shares will too. Dealing, or even just keeping tabs on the shares will also be difficult given the time difference. In addition, you will be taxed on the dividends paid on the shares: 20 per cent for basic-tax payers and 40 per cent for higher-rate payers. However, Colonial should do well in the booming European and Asian pensions markets.

GAVIN LUMSDEN

Act fast to Pep up your windfalls

Investors must act fast to avoid any pitfalls if they want to transfer free shares from demutualising building societies and insurers *into a Pep (Gavin Lumsden* writes).

The first step is vital for Alliance & Leicester members who have just one week to return their share forms. Alliance & Leicester members who want a choice of Peps must tick the option to receive a share certificate, otherwise they will have to use one of the society's new Peps. Members of Halifax, Northern Rock, Woolwich and Norwich Union *will face a similar choice soon.*

Pep companies are poised to go on a feeding frenzy as £23 billion of free shares are distributed between April and October — under Pep rules all this money can be put in Peps on top of people's normal subscription limit of £9,000.

If you are expecting more than one windfall, choose a general Pep rather than a single-company one. But don't be coerced into exchanging *your shares for units in a Pep* by companies who are not authorised equity managers.

If you want to hold your shares in a Pep for a long time, only Fidelity, Henderson, John Govett, M&G, Mercury, Perpetual, Save & Prosper and *Skandia will let you do so,* although they will make a charge for dividend payments.

Alternatively, you can use self-select Peps from Barclays Stockbrokers, NatWest Stockbrokers, *Pillings and Killick &* Co. Bear in mind that Pep providers are not keen to hold small bundles of shares because of the extra administration cost. You need to weigh the advantages of sheltering shares from tax in a Pep *against the extra costs.*

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*SOURCE: HINDSIGHT FROM HSW, OFFER TO BID, WITH NET INCOME REINVESTED TO 28/2/97. PLEASE REMEMBER THAT PAST PERFORMANCE IS NOT NECESSARILY A GUIDE TO THE FUTURE. THE VALUE OF UNITS AND THE INCOME FROM THEM MAY GO DOWN AS WELL AS UP AND YOU MAY NOT GET BACK THE FULL AMOUNT ORIGINALLY INVESTED. EXCHANGE RATES MAY ALSO CAUSE THE VALUE OF UNDERLYING OVERSEAS INVESTMENTS TO GO DOWN OR UP. THE TAX TREATMENT OF PEPS MAY BE ALTERED BY FUTURE LEGISLATION. ISSUED BY PROLIFIC UNIT TRUST MANAGERS LIMITED. REGULATED BY IMRO AND THE PERSONAL INVESTMENT AUTHORITY AND A MEMBER OF AUTIF. FULL DETAILS OF THE BRITISH LIONS COMPETITION ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

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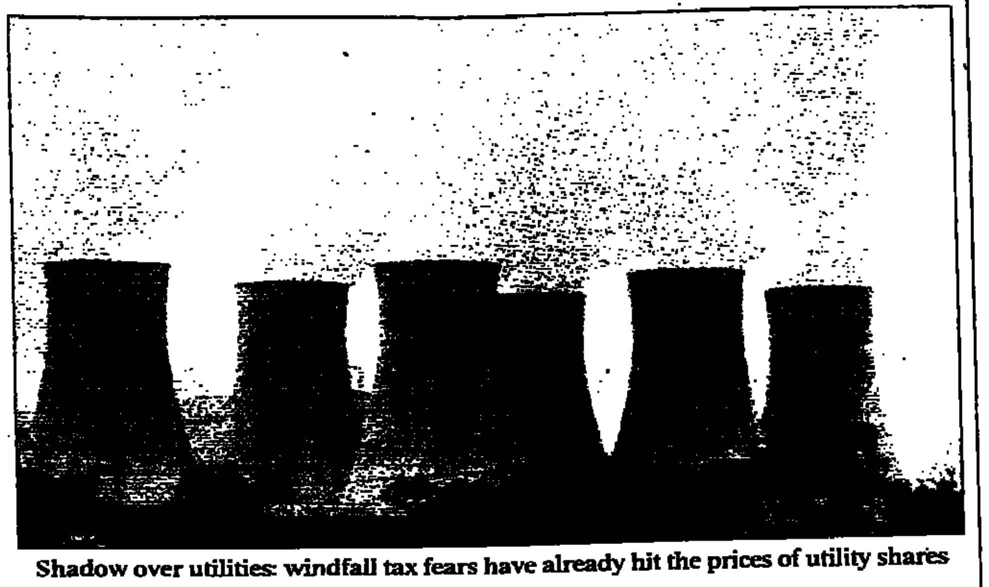
WEEKEND MONEY LETTERS

Pensioners are the victims of windfall tax



Shadow over utilities: windfall tax fears have already hit the prices of utility shares

From Mr M.C. Fitzpatrick

Sir, There has been much recent comment (Weekend Money, March 29) about the windfall tax, whereby approximately £5 billion will be levied from the privatised regulated utilities (Prus). This £5 billion will then be spent on a three-year programme to put the long-term unemployed back to work.

While I would not wish to comment on whether Labour's overall proposal is sensible or not, it is worth examining the question of who will bear the windfall tax and how much it will cost each person affected.

There are about five million individuals with shares in a Pru; separately there are about 17 million members of pension funds, most of which will have something invested (directly or indirectly) in Pru shares. If the windfall tax affects the value of Pru shares, about half the UK electorate will be affected. But what long-term impact will the windfall tax have on Pru share values?

This firm recently published a Pru share valuation model; this suggests that a £5 billion windfall tax would, on average, lead to a reduction of about 5 per cent in the value of a typical Pru share.

They have, in fact, fallen by about 5 per cent during March (against a broadly static FT index taking the month as a whole). This fall suggests that as the scope and certainty of the windfall tax becomes clearer, the tax is now largely priced into the value of Pru shares. Does this mean that the 22 million people who directly or indirectly own Pru shares will not lose out as a result of the windfall tax?

No — the impact of the windfall tax on a Pru shareholder is to cause a 5 per cent reduction in the long-term value of his investment: his shares will be worth 5 per cent less than if the windfall tax had never been invented.

An individual shareholder with £5,000 worth of Pru shares will have lost about £250; while a personal pension plan with an underlying £10,000 invested in Pru shares will have lost about £500.

The moral of all this is that there is no such thing as a victimless £5 billion tax — but then whoever claimed there was?

Yours faithfully,
MAURICE FITZPATRICK,
Senior Tax Consultant,
Chantrey Vellacott,
Russell Square House,
10-12 Russell Square, WC1.

Share allocation at Norwich Union

From Mr R. Shah

Sir, According to the Norwich Union flotation circular, the free allocation of shares is to be broadly on the basis that "all qualifying members will be entitled to a fixed allocation of 150 shares, irrespective of the number of policies held" and that those "who have one or more with profit policies which receive a regular bonus will be entitled to an additional" 150 shares "at least".

This, however, is in general terms. The circular does not contain any further details from which policyholders may assess for themselves exactly how many shares they should expect to receive. Admittedly, as the document goes on to observe, all qualifying members will have been sent a Provisional Statement of Free Share Allocation but such statement merely sets out the gross figure of the free shares, without showing how it is arrived at.

It is unclear why the Norwich Union management have shied away from including in the circular information on the precise formulae to be applied in determining the additional allocation. In this respect, the Woolwich conversion document is much more forthright, with its ready reckoner tables, while in the case of the Alliance & Leicester Building Society, its standard allocation of 250 shares poses no problem.

Yours faithfully,
RAMNIK SHAH,
Preuveneers & Co.
Solicitors,
Elm House,
113-115 London Road,
Mitcham,
Surrey.

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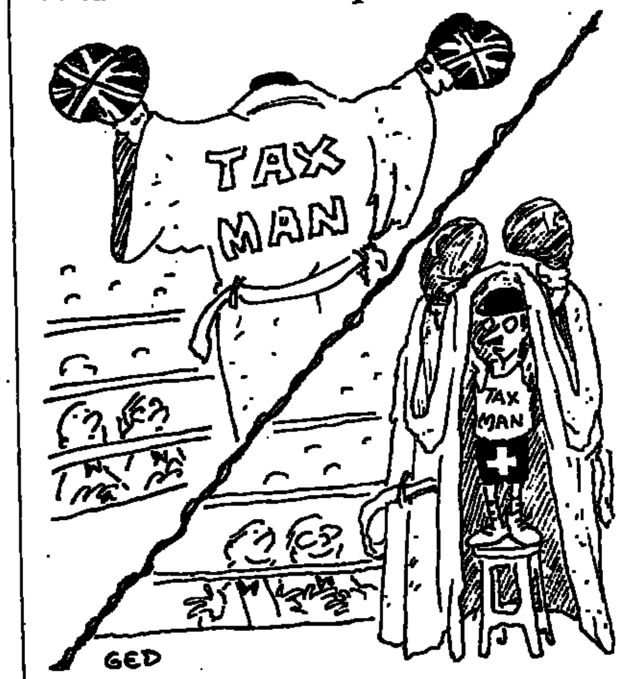

From Mr D.M. Feingold,

Sir, Might I enter the ring to assist Frank Bruno with his choice of "tax haven" (Know a nice tax haven, Harry?, March 29). Contrary to the information in your article, Switzerland (like the UK) can be a very attractive tax haven for non-Swiss citizens who choose to live there.

There are a number of special visa schemes for those with high incomes, which limits the amount of Swiss tax they pay to very modest levels. In addition, for a variety of international entertainers, sportsmen and super-rich, whose main source of income is outside Switzerland, bespoke arrangements can be made.

A good example would be the late Richard Burton, who spent the last few years of his life in Switzerland. Others include Jackie Stewart (the former racing driver) and Peter Ustinov.

Finally, if Frank wants to sample the Swiss lifestyle, without any of the above formalilties, he can try *Campione D'Italia*. This is a part of Italy located on the lakeside opposite the Swiss town of Lugano, yet physically within Switzerland. No taxes of any kind are levied and he would only need an EC passport.

Round two to Frank!

Yours faithfully,
DANIEL FEINGOLD,
Strategic Tax Planning,
UK & International Tax Consultants,
38 Clive Lodge,
Shirehall Lane, NW4.

Maturities at Britannia Life

From Mr Brian Millhouse

Sir, In response to the letter from Mr A.V. Purnell (Scots take their revenge, March 22), I fully appreciate Mr Purnell's grievance and am truly sorry he has been inconvenienced.

To ease any worries that this might have raised with our other customers, I wish to reassure all of them that the current situation in one of the Maturities Departments at Britannia Life is a temporary one. We have strengthened management within the area and anticipate being back up to date by the end of April.

The delay relates solely to policies sold by the Life Association of Scotland, a company purchased by Britannia in 1993. Maturity payments on policies sold by Britannia Life and Crusader (another company acquired by Britannia some years ago), are not affected. We have written to all of our customers who may be affected advising them of the situation and apologising for the inconvenience.

We will ensure that no affected customer is financially disadvantaged and all late payments will automatically include additional interest.

Yours faithfully,
BRIAN MILLHOUSE,
Head of Customer Service,
Britannia Life Limited,
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Glasgow.

■ Letters to Weekend Money are welcomed, but *The Times* regrets it cannot give individual replies or advice. No legal responsibility can be accepted for the advice or statements given in these columns.

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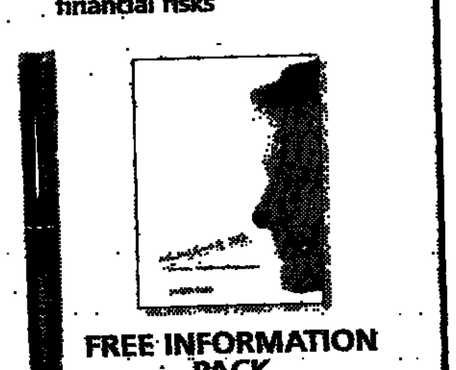

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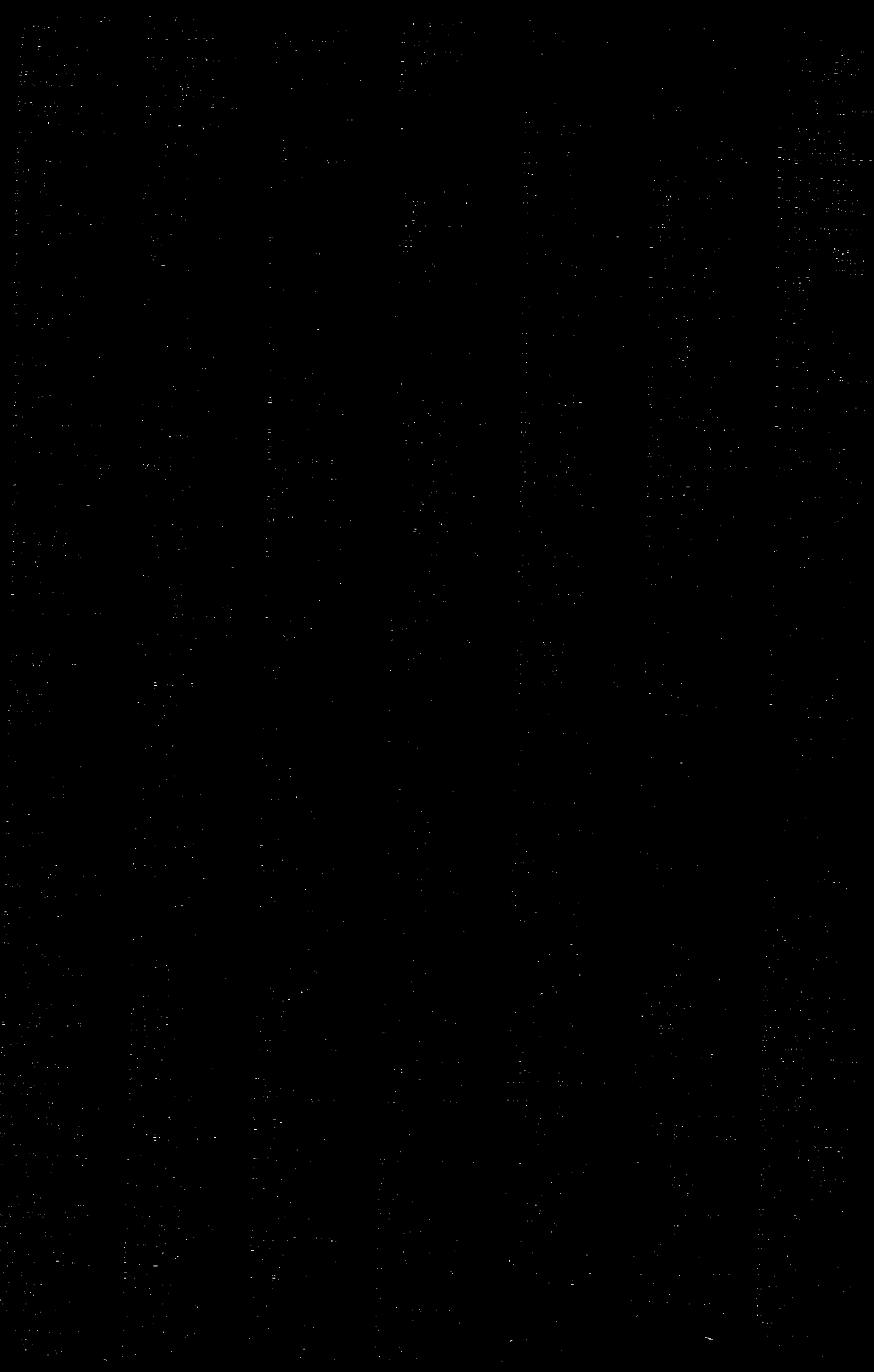

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Equities end week on steady note

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ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
469	407½	Allied Domecq	450	+ 3½	6.6	13.6
626	547½	Bulmer (HP)	590		2.9	17.6
75½	59½	Burn Stewart	60½		7.2	14.6
1040	865	Glenmorangie A	1000		1.5	27.2
503½	425½	Grand Metr	476½	+ 1	4.2	15.4
518½	424	Guinness†	499		4.0	14.2
380	334	Highland Dist	347½		3.0	18.7
336	257	Matthew Clark†	325	+ 1	9.2	15.5
100½	90½	Minyden W	90½		6.4	12.2
1978½	1462½	SA Breweries	1890½	+ 25	1.8	

BANKS

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
4705¼	3671¼	ABN-AMRO	3850	+ 12½	3.0	16.1
811	710	Abbey Natl	742	+ 14	4.4	13.1
455½	388½	Allied Irish	411	+ 3	4.4	..
409½	363½	Aus New Z	379½	+ ½	5.0	.
7678¾	5753¾	Bank America	6171½	+ 71¾		
373½	291½	Bank Scotland	320	+ 3	2.8	11.7
1226	978½	Barclays†	1029	+ 16½	3.8	10.4
635	517½	Bk of Ireland	591	+ 3½	3.5	13.4
7890¾	6006¼	Citicorp	6806¼	+ 103¾		
1731¼	1368¾	Commerzbk	1628½	− 40¾	2.7	...
862½	609½	Dai Ichi Kan Y	694¾	− 28¾	0.7	.
3490¾	2709¾	Deutsche Bk	3243¾	− 3¾	2.0	
912½	759½	Espirito Santo	884¾	.	3.8	12.6
872½	600½	Fuji Bank Y	684	− 18¾	0.6	...
1622	1272½	HSBC†	1447	+ 22½	3.5	12.5
1563½	1241	HSBC Hk†	1392	+ 19½	3.7	12.1
605	483½	Irish Perm†	567		2.8	
594	424	Lloyds TSB†	492	+ 1½	3.4	15.9
819½	689½	Nat Aust Bk	739¾	− 2¾	5.5	10.1
844½	665	Nat Westm	680½	+ 14½	5.3	10.3
632½	508	Royal Bk Scot	523½	+ 5	4.4	11.6
900½	681	Stand Chartt	826	+ 4	2.2	14.8
£164¾	£164¾	Wells Fargo	£164¾		1.9	
374¾	323¼	Westpac	323¼	− 3¾	4.1	10.6

BREWERIES, PUBS & REST

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
879½	793½	Bass	810½	− 4½	3.9	16.0
68½	54½	Brit for the Bdr	54½	− ½	4.0	14.9
205	170½	Burtonwd Brw	180	.	3.9	16.2
155½	137½	City Centre Rest	150	.	1.9	30.3
744½	612½	Compass Grp	662½	+ 12½	1.6	26.2
290½	250	Eldridge P 'A'	279½	...	2.4	17.1
485	435	Fuller Sm 'A'	482½	.	2.4	16.1
586	508½	Greenalls Grp	530½	− 2	3.6	16.7
750	643	Greene King	699½	− ½	2.9	17.2
207½	184½	Grosvenor Inns†	193½		3.9	18.7
285	218½	Groupe Chez Ger	243½		1.5	29.8
298¾	273½	Hardy Hansn	280½	.	4.7	12.7
2800	2700	Hall J	2725		2.6	14.7
78	63½	Ins Business†	72	+ 1½	2.7	
367	343	Mansfield	352½	+ 2½	2.2	16.2

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
465½	387½	Electrocomponts	395½	+ 3	2.2	24.0
226½	162½	Eurodis Elect	165	.	3.8	23.5
93½	78½	European Mtr	88½	+ 1	7.5	9.0
263	220	Evans Halshaw†	229	+ 5	9.0	
53½	42½	Fife Indmar	44½		9.3	6.7
397½	327½	Finelist Grp▼	350	.	2.1	17.8
34½	27½	Gardiner†	29½		4.0	11.3
79½	57½	Glenchewton	63½	+ 1	2.7	12.3
110	82½	Gowrings†	96		3.9	
100	82	Hamlet	95½	..	8.2	8.6
267½	239½	Harris (PhilLp)	247½	..	4.4	15.1
320½	284½	Headlam	312	+ 2½	2.4	.
156	148	Holders Tech	154	...	5.4	
240½	208	ISA Intl	230	− 3½	1.6	
285	240½	Inchcape	262½	+ 10	5.1	14.9
52½	40½	Jacks (Wm)	52½	...	4.8	18.1
246½	214½	Kwik-Fit	232½	+ 3	3.1	16.5
367	316½	Lex Service†	332	+ 2½	6.0	10.9
122	102	Lookers†	103		9.7	6.9
14½	11	Malaya Grpt	12½		6.6	.
8	6½	Middlesex	7½	+ ½	1.3	11.4
41½	31½	Midsmrs	35½	+ 2	0.8	
472	229	Nortrop	255	− 3	3.9	7.1
166½	131½	Northamber	144	...	1.2	8.6
352½	305¼	Parco▼	309½		3.2	
404½	342½	Pendragon†	369½	− 1½	3.3	17.1
223½	198½	Perry Gp	205		5.6	..
751	455	Premier Farnell	460	− 2½	3.1	17.9
152½	137½	Quicks Group	138½	...	6.5	
348	307½	REA	315	.	1.6	37.8
2½	2½	Reece	2½	...	...	..
28	18½	Ronson	20½		9.1	7.1
4	2½	Ross Gp	3		.	.
109½	78½	Rylands†	90½	...	5.6	16.2
38	25½	SEP Indlt	28½	− ½	8.3	7.1
92½	55	Salsiro	58½		2.1	19.0
415½	377½	Time Products	385		3.6	15.8
270	228	UMECO	240		2.5	17.2
352½	292½	Vardy (Reg)†	332½		2.6	14.6
850	498½	WF Elect	615		2.7	22.3
41	31½	Wilshaw	35½	.	3.0	10.4
172½	147½	Wyko†	150		2.2	17.5
154½	119½	Young (H)	135½	.	3.9	11.7

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
420	327½	Antofagasta	358	+ 1	1.8	.
328	283½	Ascot Hldgs	287	+ 3½	2.3	..
876	790	Broken Hill	804	− 1½	3.0	18.5
289	237½	BTR†	260	+ 3½	4.6	14.3
568	462	BAT†	519½	+ 3½	6.3	11.0
195½	128	Bibby (J)	188		5.0	10.9
60½	53½	Brierley Inv	55	− ½	8.4	9.2
856½	715	Charter†	776½	− ½	4.7	11.0
266	216	Cookson†	217	− 5½	5.0	15.8
229½	200½	Cosalt†	206	+ 1½	6.0	9.9
313½	255½	DCC	295		2.9	11.7
133	115½	Grampian Hdg	120½	− ½	8.5	12.4
140½	124½	Hanson Cred	126½	− 1½	9.3	11.3
509¾	423½	Hutch Whamp	435	+ 9½	2.3	18.1
438½	375	Imperial Tobacco	411½	+ 3½	6.1	8.2

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
46½	30	Simon Eng	44½	− 1	...	..
227½	125	Six Hundred	126	...	4.7	2.5
832½	742½	Smiths Ind	792	+ 3½	2.6	20.3
720½	638½	Spirax-Sarco†	653½	.	2.8	17.2
303½	273½	Sterling Ind	276	.	4.0	13.9
594½	515	TI†	550½	+ 3	3.3	18.3
113½	101½	Tinsley (E)	101½	− 4	7.3	10.5
120½	102½	TransTec	117½	− ½	2.5	..
206½	177½	Triplex Lloyd	178½	− 1	4.9	10.1
167½	150½	Unicorn Ind	159½		4.9	
70	48½	Utd Inds	63	+ 2	4.9	17.7
273½	228½	Vickers†	233½	+ 1	3.9	14.0
10½	8½	Vikers Grp	9		..	
712½	615	Vibe	617½	− 1	2.5	11.1
952	868½	Vosper Thorny	868½	.	3.5	14.5
350	280	Wagon Ind	281½	.	8.8	8.6
263½	203½	Weir†	246	+ 8½	4.1	14.1
259½	242½	Wellington Hdgt	243½		4.2	
33	25	Wellman	25½		8.8	5.6
61½	48	Wescol	52½	..	2.6	17.3
575	535	Whatman	568½	+ 2½	3.0	..
65½	41½	Widney†	47½		9.2	14.5

ENGINEERING, VEHICLES

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
140	120	Adwest†	130½	+ 4½	7.5	18.4
197	186	Airflow Stream	195	.	5.1	8.4
757	688	Avon Rubber	710		3.4	13.7
107	97½	BSG	103½	+ 1½	4.4	
270	227½	Bostrom	262½	.	3.4	.
16½	16½	Bousfield#	16½		7.6	38.7
707	657½	First Tech	666½	+ 1½	1.8	19.8
1038½	910	GKN†	977½		3.4	
3653½	3287½	General Mtr	3306½	− 12½	3.7	...
583½	507½	Heyes†	507½	− 5	3.7	12.0
1975½	1540½	Honda Motor	1812½	− 4½	0.4	
407½	344½	Laird	393½	+ 4½	4.2	11.0
228	188	LucasVarity	197½	+ 5½	0.0	.
165½	131	Mayflower	151½	+ ½	1.9	28.3
172½	157½	Sylone	160½	...	4.6	11.8
179	144	T & N	150½	+ ½	5.1	..
85½	32½	Toad	35½			
339½	277½	Toolly Hldgs	329	.	3.2	16.7

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
94	79	Edin Dragon	79½		...	...
30	24	Edinburgh Inca	28½		...	...
372½	343½	Edinburgh	359	+ 1	3.6	31.1
119	102½	EFM Japan	106½	− ½		
502	420½	Electra Inv	462½	+ 2	2.3	43.3
272	243	Electric Gen	261½	− ½	1.8	58.4
267½	86½	English Nat	181	− 4	0.3	
156½	144½	Eng & Scot	149½	..	2.5	38.9
406½	378½	European Asset†	379½		1.4	.
108½	92½	Fidelity Asian Val	92½	− ½		
253½	216½	Fidelity Euro Val	240½		0.2	..
47½	36½	Fidelity Jap Val	37½	+ ½	0.9	..
136½	126	Fidelity Spec Val	128½	− ½	0.5	
226½	205½	Finsbury 'A'	209½	− ½	2.3	47.2
195½	162½	Five Arr Chile	185½	+ ½	1.6	65.3
38½	22½	Five Arr Wts	29½		.	
438½	375½	Fleming Amerl	389½	+	0.9	
76½	66	Fleming Chinese	70½		0.9	..
31	24½	Fleming Ch Wts	25½			
326½	280½	Fleming Claver	312½		2.6	40.8
437	381	Fleming Contl	404		1.2	..
142½	113	Fleming Em Mkts	127		0.2	
252	227½	Fleming Engl	236½	..	2.8	30.0
283½	255½	Fleming F East	256		0.6	..
423½	410½	Fleming Fledg†	411		0.8	
110½	103½	Fleming Ing Inct	104		11.4	10.8
178	117	Fleming Ing Cap	155½			
51	43½	Fleming Indian	45			
22	15	Fleming In Wts	15½			
197½	167½	Fleming Japan	173	− 2½		
384½	335½	Fleming Merc	368½	...	3.0	
114½	107½	Fleming Mid Rest	107	− ½	0.6	
352	321½	Fleming Oseat	325	+ ½	1.8	66.8
160½	139½	Fleming Smll Co	156	+ ½	3.6	32.9
164½	147½	Foreign & Col†	150½	+ ½	7.9	
97½	91½	F&C Inc Gwt	93	+ ½	4.8	27.3
110½	85	F&C Emg Mkts	100			
146½	122	F&C Enterprise†	145½	+ 2½	3.0	49.0
331	295½	F&C Eurost	306½	− 1	0.5	
152½	135½	F&C German	141½		0.5	
167	145½	F&C Pacific	145½	− 1½	1.6	58.7
149½	142½	F&C PEP	143		3.6	33.0
185½	168½	F&C Smaller	181½	− ½	1.7	72.2
138½	122½	F&C US Smlr	123			
62½	57½	Framlin Inc	60		10.4	10.7
87½	60½	Framlin Cap	70	+ ½		..
68½	40½	Framl Dual Cp	60			.
19½	11	Fulcrum Cap	17½		.	

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
196½	192½	Murray S/C DP	194½	+ ½	.	.
220½	163½	Murray S/C Cap	202½	− 1		
73½	65½	Murray S/C Inc	67½	..	21.4	5.5
3750	3150	Murray S/C Ulc	3700	.	3.9	
485½	419	Murray Small	440½	+ 1	1.4	65.1
402½	387	Murray Vent	391½	.	4.8	21.7
5½	5½	Newmarket	5½			
407½	353½	O'seas Inv Tst	385½	+ ½	1.2	79.4
210½	156½	O'seas Wts	195			
126	102½	Pacific Assets	103½		0.5	...
109½	98	Perp Inc Gth	104	+ ½	2.1	.
54½	44	Perpetual Jap	44½	− ½		
368½	316½	Perpl Uk Sm Cot	324		3.7	29.0
£139½	£128½	Personal Assets	£138		2.0	47.8
128½	109½	Pilot Inv†	122½		2.1	49.9
134½	113½	Prolific Inc†	117½	+ ½	5.0	27.0
251½	229	RIT Cap Ptnr	236	+ ½	0.9	..
542¼	475½	Robeco	516	− 1½	2.2	...
551½	497	Rolinco	532½	− 1½	1.2	..
108½	91½	Schrd Asia Pac	92½		0.3	.
95½	79	Schrod Emg Cmt	85			
136	117½	Schrod Inc Gwtht	125	+ 1½	4.0	23.7
58½	51	Schrod Jap Gwth	57	− ½	.	
512½	410	Schrod Korea	434½	+ ½	.	
29	19½	Schrod Sdlr Cap	26½			
115½	105	Schrod Split Inct	111		9.2	
146½	142½	Schrod Splt Zero	143½		..	
137½	126½	Schrod UK Gwth	127	...	3.0	24.8
207½	188½	Schrod Vent Ind	190½		.	
299	273½	Scot	282½	+ 1½	2.6	45.8
184½	168½	Scot American†	171	+ ½	3.8	34.2
211½	179½	Scot Asian	176½	− 3½		
856	700	Scot Wts	700	− 20		
111½	98½	Scot Eastern	106½	+ ½	2.3	
302	279½	Scot Mtge	283½	+ 1	2.1	47.8
100	93	Scot Natl Tst†	94½	..	11.0	11.0
126½	117½	Scot Value	122		2.0	60.3
2126	1977½	Second Alliance†	1977½	− 2½	3.1	38.9
111½	95½	Secs Tst of Scot	102½	+ ½	4.5	27.3
156½	133½	Shires Smlrt	148		5.1	23.8
385	355	St Andrew Inv†	373½	− ½	3.2	
409½	377½	Temple Bar	380½	+ 2	5.3	21.7
87½	78½	Throgmorton	83½	+ ½	3.4	39.9
157½	131	Tpltn Emg Mkt	142		0.9	
195½	179½	TR City Of Lon†	187½	+ 1	4.1	28.7
176½	133	TR Euro Growth	160		2.7	
182½	160½	TR Far East	162		5.3	24.2
119½	105½	TR Pacific†	106½	− ½	0.3	

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
223	215½	GGT Group▼	215½	− 2½	3.5	15.1
232½	187½	GWR Gp	225½	− 2	1.4	39.1
387½	300½	Gearhouse Group†	375½		2.0	18.7
34½	29½	Goodhead†	31		1.0	18.9
291½	256	Grampian	262½	− 9	2.9	21.0
372½	277½	HTV Group†	280	+ 1	1.8	...
387½	232½	Haynes Publ	257½	− 2½	5.2	11.8
22½	17½	Highbury Hse	18	...	..	
230	215	Hodder H line	220		3.8	.
285	243	Home Counts	260		2.6	29.6
229½	295	IBC	321		3.2	12.0
26½	21½	Incepta	22	− ½		14.9
332½	297½	Independent†	317½		2.4	
135	65	Interscope	134	+ 1½	3.8	10.6
206½	184½	Johnston Press	199½	+ 3	1.5	22.5
30	25	Lopex	28	+ ½	3.3	
211	140	MAID	204	+ 4		
327½	282½	Maiden	320½	− 2	1.9	38.0
36½	26½	MediaKey†	33½	+ 3	4.2	
1265	1100	Metal Bulletin†	1105	− 10	2.3	32.2
157½	129½	Midland Ind	145½	− ½	3.3	
226½	199	Mirror Grp†	206	− ½	2.7	14.4
705	615	More Grp†	621		3.0	15.5
338½	273½	News Corp	274	− ½	0.5	7.8
288	223½	News Corp Prf	223½		1.6	
47½	27½	On Demand Inf	38½	− 5½	..	
37½	24½	Osprey Commns	26½			12.0
797½	702½	Pearson	741½	+ 1½	3.1	58.9
63	43	Phonelink	58	− 1		
845	750	Portsmth Sund	840		2.0	16.9
258½	226½	Quarto†	232½	+ 1	4.3	8.8
1303½	1017½	Reed Int	1109	+ 2	3.1	19.4
755½	575½	Reuters†	588½	+ 12	2.5	19.3
404	348	Scot Radio	369		2.6	19.8
698	542½	Scot TV	680½	− 2	3.5	21.9
62½	46½	Shandwick†	52		3.4	9.6
26	15	Sleepy Kids	18½	+ ½	0.7	6.9
519	480	Southnews	506½	+ 5½	1.6	27.8
30½	24½	Sterling Pub	24½			48.1
53	40½	Taylor Nelson	51½	+ 1½	1.9	.
205	183	Television Cpt	184		2.0	15.5
1386½	1160½	Thomson Corp	1210½	+ 42	3.8	25.4
505½	456½	Trinity Intl†	473½	− 3	3.1	19.4
183	151½	Ulster TV†	151½		4.2	.
771	657½	United News†	724½	+ 4	4.1	48.2
90½	55½	VTR	65½	.	9.1	5.2
305½	167½	Visual Action†	182½		2.8	15.1
279½	236	WPP	245½	− ½	0.9	17.8

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
64¾	54½	Rutland Tst	57½	− ¼	3.1	
130½	99½	SEC Group	129		4.6	11.5
445	394	S & U	426	.	4.8	10.7
1782½	1500	Schroders†	1582½	+ 17½	1.6	17.2
1577½	1325	Schroders N/V†	1377½	+ 15½	1.8	15.0
162½	127½	Singer & Fried	138	.	4.3	11.6
49½	37½	Towry Law	38½		..	
4	3½	Trio Hldgs	3½			
106½	71	Union	78½	− ½	2.4	..
342½	310	Wellrust	320		5.0	15.1

PHARMACEUTICALS

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
264½	192	Brit Biotech	246½	+ 4½	...	
1115	665	Cantab Pharms	975	− 2½		.
673	470	Celltech	556	− 2½	..	
443½	312½	Chiroscience	364	+ 7½		.
280	177½	Cortecs	250	− 6		
1173½	885½	Glaxo Wellt	1090	+ 3	3.8	22.5
245	186½	ML Laboratories	187½	− 7		49.1
330½	252	Medeva†	306	+ 3	2.0	
403	228½	Peptide Thera	328½	− 1½		
32	24½	Proteus Intl	66½	+ 4		.
737½	362½	Scotia	438½	+ 13½		
246	216	Shire Pharms	223½	..		.
86½	64½	SkyePharma	67½	+ 1½		
960½	768½	SmithKline†	857½	+ 9½	2.3	21.9
392	299½	Therp Ant Inc	365½	− 4		
787½	512½	Vanguard	640			.
435	210	Xenova	380			
1930	1585½	Zeneca†	1740	+ 12½	2.5	24.6

PRINTING & PAPER

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
142	136	AG Holdings	136		5.5	11.3
782	712½	API	755		1.8	24.0
65	47½	App Holo	56½			
201½	151	Arjo Wiggins†	201	+ 1½	4.7	17.1
201	120	Aspen Comm	180		4.3	
21¾	17½	Bath Press	21½		2.6	11.7
450½	422½	Bemrose	432½		4.5	
229½	182½	Blagden†	186		1.7	
2646½	2178½	Bowater Inc	2309½	+ 9½		
321½	298	Boxmore Intl	298	− 2½	1.3	
745	650	Br Polythene†	662½		3.5	
24½	14½	Br Thornton	22½	+ 3½		
148	116	Britton Grp	117	.	3.6	11.0
234	199½	Bunzl†	217	+ 1	3.6	13.2
233½	186½	Capital Inds	191½	+ 3	3.8	
388½	333½	Cooper (James)	356	.	1.4	13.0
673½	521	De La Rue	521	− 2½	5.8	13.3
74½	74½	Delyn Group#	74½		3.4	14.8
224½	186½	Dolphin Pack	222½		4.0	
79½	62½	Fairway Group†	62½		8.0	14.5

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
200½	141½	MFI	144	− ½	4.0	13.9
510½	458½	Marks Spencer	492½	+ 2	3.0	19.4
545	445	Menzies (John)	471½	.	3.7	12.3
26¼	22½	Merchant Retail	23½	− ¼		27.8
1410	1155	Moss Bros	1382½	− 7½	1.7	28.2
637½	523½	Next	608	+ 4	3.1	19.4
41½	29½	Oliver (G)	30	...		
595	477½	[illegible]	508½		3.0	15.6
74½	69½	Partridge Fine†	72½	.	5.3	14.1
40½	28½	QS Hldgs	39½	.	4.9	.
337½	299½	Rosebys	322½	− 1	3.1	
95½	71½	Sears	75½	+ 1½	6.5	61.5
36½	28½	Signet Group	36½	.	..	..
484	423	Smith WH	458	+ 8	4.3	
1110	970	Sothebys	970		2.5	
309½	232	Storehouse	236	− 1	4.0	15.7
150	107	Stylo	112½	+ 2½	5.2	17.4
202½	175½	T & S Stores	195½	.	5.1	...
288½	159	Thorn†	160½	− 2½	10.4	12.4
188½	186½	Tie Rack	187½	.	1.9	18.7
4	3	Upton & South	3½	.		17.7
543½	481½	Vendome	509½	+ 1	2.5	18.8
26	19	WEW Group	19½	− ½	...	16.3
417½	132½	Wickes	139½			
121½	76½	Wld of Leather	115½	− 2	2.2	24.1
275½	232½	Wyevale†	275½	...	2.8	19.8

SUPPORT SERVICES

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
1670	1300	ADT	1517½	.		
525	396	AEA Tech	470	+ 15	2.0	21.7
113	97	Alpha Airpts	98½	+ ½	6.3	12.6
43½	34½	Alphameric	35½	+ ½		13.9
387½	309	Atkins WS	315½	..	2.5	22.9
189½	152½	BNB Res	165	..	5.9	
457½	394½	BPP	452½	...	3.7	
182½	150½	BSM	150½	.	6.5	
699	416	BTG	682½	+ 33½	0.7	
89½	69½	Brooks Service	75		6.0	
510	463	Business Post	465½	− 6½	2.5	23.8
1262½	840	CMG	1130		0.7	
250½	222½	CRT Grp	232	− 1½	2.2	29.2
805	580	Caird Gp	772½	.	1.3	7.1
836	485½	Capita Group†	675	+ 5	0.9	47.7
9	6½	Charmes	8½	− ½	2.1	21.6
439½	308	Chubb Sec	422½	− ½	2.6	20.6
236	172½	Corp Services†	188	− 3½	3.3	
58½	45½	Coutts Consig	46½	.	6.4	
346	250½	DCS Gp	322½	+ 6	0.6	40.7
270½	232½	Davis Service	265½	.	5.0	13.6
910	730	Delphi	802½		0.9	
252	170	Dudley Jenkins†	210		2.3	19.7
79½	49½	EW Fact	52½		4.9	
100	64½	El Dao Pref	65	− 5	4.2	9.8
602	485	FI Group	488½		1.1	39.5
578½	516	Hays	531½	− 2	2.0	22.0
313½	194½	Hogg Robinson	304½	+ 4½	5.6	9.4
837	530	JBA Hldgs	695		0.7	41.6
295	253	Johnson Cleans	274	.	5.4	.
114½	89½	Kalamazoo	92½	+ 3	5.7	9.5
622	521½	Kewill Sys	585		1.8	16.0

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BRITISH FUNDS

SHORTS (under 5 years)

1997 High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gss red yld
100	100	Treas 7% 1997	100		6.98	6.25
101½	100	Treas 8¾% 1997	100	.	8.67	6.22
106	104	Exch 15% 1997	104	−	14.38	6.33
103	102	Exch 9¾% 1998	102		9.52	6.64
101	100	Treas 7¼% 1998	100		7.21	6.64
110	107	Treas 14% 1998-01	107	−	13.00	6.75
114	111	Treas 15½% 1998	111	−	13.86	6.85
109	107	Exch 12% 1998	107	−	11.15	6.90
105	104	Treas 9½% 1999	104	−	9.13	6.94
111	109	Exch 12¼% 1999	109	−	11.20	7.04
108	106	Treas 10½% 1999	106	−	9.86	7.01
99	97	Treas 6% 1999	97		6.14	7.02
110	107	Conv 10¼% 1999	107	−	9.57	7.15
106½	104½	Conv 9% 2000	104		8.62	7.22
104	102	Treas 8% 2000	102	+	7.83	7.27
119	116	Treas 13% 2000	116	−	11.18	7.28
112	108	Treas 10% 2001	108	+	9.21	7.32
101½	98	Treas 7% 2001	98	+	7.11	7.37

MEDIUMS (5 to 15 years)

1997 High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gss red yld
112	109	Treas 9½% 2002	109	+	8.88	7.50
105	102	Treas 8% 2003	102	+	7.81	7.49
116	111	Treas 10% 2003	112	+	8.92	7.56
116	113	Treas 11¾% 2001-04	113		10.11	7.37
85	82	Fund 3½% 1999-04	83	+	4.18	6.35
114	110	Conv 9½% 2004	110	+	8.58	7.60
98	94	Treas 6¾% 2004	95	+	7.08	7.55
109	104	Treas 8½% 2005	105	+	8.08	7.64
112	110	Conv 9½% 2005	110	+	8.57	7.65
129	124	Treas 12½% 2003-05	125	+	9.98	7.57
103	98	Treas 7½% 2006	98	+	7.58	7.66
107	99	Treas 7¾% 2006	100	−	7.73	7.70
104	100	Treas 8% 2002-06	100 †	−	7.93	7.65
123	115	Treas 11¾% 2003-07	119 †	+	9.85	7.56
110	105	Treas 8½% 2007	105	+	8.06	7.71
114	108	Treas 9% 2008	108 †	+	8.23	7.74
106	101	Treas 8% 2009	101	+	7.89	7.78

LONGS (over 15 years)

1997 High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gss red yld
91½	86	Treas 6¼% 2010	86	+	7.19	7.82
115	109½	Conv 9% 2011	110	+	8.18	7.81
116	109	Treas 9% 2012	110	+	8.15	7.81
85	80	Treas 5½% 2008-12	81	+	6.76	7.58
107	100	Treas 8% 2013	101 †	+	7.88	7.82
104	98	Treas 7¾% 2012-15	99	+	7.80	7.84
107	101	Treas 8% 2015	101	+	7.85	7.80
115	103	Treas 8¾% 2017	109	+	8.02	7.84
108	101	Tr 8% 2021	102	+	7.83	7.79

UNDATED

1997 High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	Int yld %	Gss red yld
47	43	War Ln 3½%	44		7.89	.
33	30	Treas 2½%	31	+	7.91	.
54	49	Consols 4%	49	−	8.08	

INDEX-LINKED on projected inflation of:

1997 High	Low	Stock	Price £	+/-	10%	5%
114	113	Treas IL 4⅝% 1998	113		.	2.31
187	184	Treas IL 2½% 2001	185	+	2.81	3.42
184	180	Treas IL 2½% 2003	181	+	3.06	3.50
120	117	Treas IL 4⅜% 2004	117	+	3.11	3.50
196	190	Treas IL 2% 2006	190	+	3.25	3.55
176	170	Treas IL 2½% 2009	171	+	3.34	3.58
183	176	Treas IL 2½% 2011	177	+	3.39	3.60
150	144	Treas IL 2½% 2013	145	+	3.43	3.62
161	153	Treas IL 2½% 2016	155	+	3.47	3.64
154	147	Treas IL 2½% 2020	148	+	3.53	3.68
128	122	Treas IL 2½% 2024	123	+	3.55	3.68
126	119	Treas IL 4⅛% 2030	120 †	+	3.55	3.68

ALTERNATIVE INV MARKET

1997 High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	P/E
107½	84½	Abacus Recruit	100½		0.6	19.4
210½	170	Cafe Inns	190	.	1.6	14.6
209½	153½	Country Gdns	206½	+ 11	1.0	
2560	2150	Dawson Hldgs	2387½		2.2	17.6
51¼	42½	Freepages	42½	− ½		
93½	88½	Megalomedia	92½			51.9
65	33½	Memory Corp	33½	− 1	...	...
239½	210	Old English Pub	217½	+ 1½	0.8	68.3
580	235	Prism Rail	355	+ 5		
1265	945	Ramco Egy	1035	+ 22½	0.1	
783	619½	Southern News	782½	+ 3	2.9	25.4
70½	65½	Southern Vectis	70½		3.4	15.2
496	410	Surrey Fr Inns†	445		0.7	30.8
60½	33½	Trocadero	35½	− ½	.	

Source: FT Information

Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * Figures or report awaited; ... No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index.

THE TIMES UNIT TRUST INFORMATION SERVICE

For AB see Govett (John)

	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
AXA EQUITY & LAW UNIT TST MGRS				
01203 553 231				
General Acc	718.50	764.40	-10.50	2.36
General Inc	595.30	633.30	- 8.70	2.36
UK Growth Acc	497.70	529.50	- 8.30	2.49
UK Growth Inc	322.20	342.80	- 5.30	2.49
Higher Inc Acc	889.00	945.80	- 9.10	3.96
Higher Inc Inc	473.60	503.90	- 4.90	3.96
Gilts/Fxd Int Acc	213.80	225.80	- 1.00	5.61
Gilts/Fxd Int Inc	91.38	96.52	- 0.38	5.61
Nth America	338.40	360.00	-22.20	...
Europe	388.90	413.80	-13.90	0.35
Brit Excell	98.08	104.40	- 2.60	2.62
Brit Fndmtls Acc	125.30	133.40	- 1.30	4.62
Brit Fndmtls Inc	82.70	87.98	- 0.87	4.62
Global Opps	102.10	108.70	- 2.80	0.11
Balanced Acc	65.69	69.89	- 0.93	2.34
Balanced Inc	60.78	64.66	- 1.47	2.34
Japan Acc	37.51	39.91	+ 0.10	.
Pac Basin Acc	375.40	399.40	- 9.40	1.00
ABBEY UNIT TST MGRS				
0345 717 373				
Gilts & Fixed Int	131.20	139.30†	- 0.50	6.68
High Inc Equity	193.20	206.60†	- 6.70	4.60
Worldwide Bond	263.50	279.40	- 1.80	4.30
American Growth	403.00	430.80	-22.40	0.39
Asian Pacific	313.10	334.90	-21.00	0.41
Assets & Earnings	315.10	337.00	- 9.30	2.80
Euro Capital Acc	198.20	212.00	- 8.70	0.75
Extra Inc	42.77	45.50†	- 0.07	8.04
General	287.40	305.70	- 4.40	3.01
Global Opps	72.20	76.81	- 2.36	0.52
Japan	87.37	93.44	- 1.29	..
Managed Inc	48.85	51.97†	- 0.50	4.33
Mastertrust	171.50	183.40	- 5.20	1.32
US Emerging Cos	168.00	179.70	-11.00	.
Ethical	86.10	91.60	- 1.70	1.80
International	134.50	143.10	- 5.00	0.61
Dividend & Growth	72.11	78.71	- 0.66	4.38
Global Gwth & Sec	74.91	79.92	- 0.13	2.53
Latin America	79.80	84.89	- 1.14	0.46
Capital Reserve	148.20	148.20		4.72
ABBEY NATIONAL UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
0141 275 8500				
N&P UK Growth	98.02	102.10	- 1.90	2.35
Equity Income	135.50	144.10	- 2.20	4.18
Extra Income	262.40	279.10	- 3.58	6.45
Smaller Cos	112.10	119.20†	- 1.00	1.50
International	115.20	122.50	- 3.50	1.41
ABERFORTH UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
0131 220 0733				
UK Small Cos	2538.00	2627.00	-29.00	.
ABTRUST UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
0800 833 580				
Amer Inc & Growth	61.26	63.58†	- 3.35	...
Emerging Mkts	76.50	79.68	- 3.23	0.04
European	158.70	168.60	- 8.70	..
Extra Income #	50.81	53.47†	- 1.39	6.08
Far East Emg Ecn	124.70	130.80	- 4.70	0.48
Fixed Interest #	26.53	27.59	- 0.03	8.81
Fund Inv Tst #	164.30	172.40†	- 6.60	9.53
Japan	153.80	159.90	- 1.90	..
Latin American	68.42	71.19	- 0.94	0.66
Pacific	78.30	82.30†	- 2.04	0.32
Property Share	79.98	83.96	- 0.60	2.09
UK Emerging Cos	71.46	77.23	- 1.52	1.25
UK Growth	58.13	60.54†	- 2.82	1.94
Wor World Port #	84.45	86.35	- 1.96	2.88
Ethical	80.49	83.71	- 0.70	2.11
Aberdeen Gilt Inc #	49.90	49.95†	- 0.06	7.42
AIRWAYS UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
0171 256 5888				
Resdtl Property #	99.36	105.70†	+ 0.20	5.37
ALLCHURCHES INV MGMT SVS LTD				
01452 305 958				
Amity Income	96.31	102.19†	- 1.03	1.98
Income Builder Inc	84.93	90.35	- 0.97	3.87

	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
Pacific Portfolio	154.40	166.11†	- 5.91	0.79
UK Equity	102.12	109.11†	- 2.78	3.27
UK Equity & Bd	60.48	64.11	- 0.55	6.39
UK Smlr Cos	54.27	58.05†	- 0.62	1.82
CBF CHURCH OF ENGLAND FUNDS				
0171 588 1815				
Inv Fd Inc	805.07	817.23	.	4.21
Inv Fd Acc	805.07	817.23	..	...
Fxd Int Sec Inc	155.46	156.08	...	9.18
Fxd Int Sec Acc	155.46	156.08	...	.
COIF CHARITY FUNDS				
0171 588 1815				
Investment Inc	889.36	921.80	-10.14	4.19
Investment Acc	237.78	238.35	-47.75	.
Fixed Int Inc	128.68	129.20	- 0.21	8.98
Fixed Int Acc	239.31	240.27	- 0.72	..
CITY FINANCIAL UT MGRS LTD				
0171 407 5966				
Beckman Intl	84.51	89.10	- 2.05	5.62
Beck Bio-Tech	37.98	41.36	- 3.99	.
Acorn Ethical Tst	183.97	193.18	- 5.20	0.44
City Fin Assets	81.17	85.24†	- 1.07	1.81
City Fin Intl	87.32	91.69	- 3.09	0.14
Friars Hse Cap	317.41	337.67	- 5.88	2.35
Buckley Wrld Gth	139.93	148.32†	- 3.29	.
J Sld Inc/Gth Inc	57.83	60.73	- 1.40	3.42
Shaw Utilities	64.58	68.08	+ 0.12	6.70
CITY OF LONDON UNIT TST MGRS LTD				
0171 711 0771 Admin: 01277 227 300				
Emerging Markets	59.25	62.86	- 0.85	..
CLERICAL MEDICAL UT MGRS LTD				
0345 772 233				
American Gwth	77.24	82.17†	- 5.04	...
Dragon Growth	68.78	73.54	- 2.40	0.45
Equity High Inc	98.64	103.56†	- 1.70	3.74
-do- Accum	141.67	151.82	- 2.49	3.74
Extra Income Inc	26.48	27.88†	- 0.52	7.27
Extra Income Acc	29.97	31.56†	- 0.14	7.27
European Gwth	65.01	70.04	- 3.55	0.55
Evergreen	30.76	32.89†	- 1.05	...
General Equity	113.22	120.13	- 2.59	2.70
Japan Growth	37.63	40.03	+ 0.32	..
Pedigree Gwth	67.30	72.15	- 1.72	2.17
Pad Sml Cos Inc	40.47	43.52	- 0.51	1.15
-do- Accum	43.14	46.39	- 0.55	1.15
Retirement Inc #	29.51	31.43†	- 0.61	5.65
Special Sits	49.87	53.62	- 0.80	2.83
UK & Overseas	61.22	64.96	- 2.22	0.68
COLONIAL UNIT TRUSTS (UK) LTD				
01634 898 000				
Balanced	73.70	76.77	- 0.53	4.03
Capital	88.81	92.51	- 1.27	2.38
High Income	52.45	54.63	- 0.23	6.77
Top 50	60.70	63.22	- 1.00	2.55
COMMERCIAL UNION TRUST MGRS LTD				
0181 686 9818				
PRESTIGE PORTFOLIO (PPT FUNDS)				
Income Funds				
Equity Inc	201.24	209.65†	- 5.86	4.38
Long Gilt	43.44	45.23†	- 0.36	6.26
Monthly Inc Plus	51.05	53.18†	- 0.70	8.43
Preference Share	48.22	50.23†	- 1.33	7.76
Balanced Funds				
High Yield	146.37	152.48†	- 7.44	5.59
Managed Fund	77.70	80.95†	- 2.54	2.74
UK Growth Funds				
Smaller Cos	57.02	59.40†	+ 0.08	1.80
-do- Accum	68.19	71.04†	+ 1.63	1.60
UK & General	105.36	109.75†	- 1.49	2.75
-do- Accum	139.66	145.49†	- 0.75	2.75
UK Growth	210.47	219.26†	- 4.43	1.28
International Growth Funds				
Europe Growth	224.43	233.81†	- 9.83	0.82
Far Eastern Gth	122.94	128.08†	- 3.62	0.03
Global Bond	72.78	75.82†	- 1.87	6.54
Japan Growth	91.95	95.79†	- 0.27	.
North Amer Gth	245.98	256.26†	-17.03	.
Oriental Growth	80.56	83.93†	- 2.77	0.28
Worldwide Growth	72.80	75.95†	- 2.75	.

	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
JOHNSON FRY UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
Enq 01277 227300 Dealing 01277 690446				
Sector Value Inc #	111.00	117.10	- 2.40	3.48
Sector Value Gwth	113.30	119.50	- 2.50	1.77
Hy 5 Europe	108.50	114.00	- 4.20	1.96
Slater Gwth	202.10	215.80	- 4.20	0.93
New Japan	75.49	79.66	- 2.80	.
JUPITER UT MGRS LTD				
0171 581 3020				
World Health	176.00	187.20	-28.10	...
Income #	240.08	255.40	- 3.32	4.06
UK Growth	93.62	99.59	- 1.15	1.86
Intl Growth	89.28	94.87	- 2.43	0.59
Ecology	108.90	115.85†	- 1.89	0.90
European	224.89	239.13	- 5.54	0.21
Far Eastern	302.40	321.60	- 2.80	.
UK Special Sits	59.30	63.25†	- 1.15	0.38
Fd of Inv Tsts	55.38	59.07	- 1.03	...
High Income #	53.88	57.47†	- 1.82	4.87

	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
Sth East Asia	385.20	407.40†	-21.20	1.18
-do- Accum	516.90	546.60†	-28.60	1.18
Treasury	25.12	25.17†	+ 0.03	5.88
Trustee	45.90	49.60	- 0.40	4.95
-do- Accum	205.10	215.80	- 1.70	4.95
MGM UNIT MANAGERS LTD				
Dealing: 01277 261 018 Enq: 01903 204 631				
European Growth	108.54	113.33†	- 5.05	0.50
Intl Bond	62.25	65.38	- 0.56	4.80
Intl Equity Growth	84.86	90.18	- 3.19	0.64
N Amer Growth	141.12	149.95†	- 9.81	0.83
Special Sits Growth	29.95	31.86†	- 0.47	2.07
UK Growth	489.31	520.54†	-13.05	2.50
-do- Accum	682.57	726.13	-10.78	2.50
MW JOINT INVESTORS LTD				
01620 825867				
Balanced Fd #	1450.88	1473.40	-37.18	3.40
Income #	1056.50	1073.20	-18.50	4.60

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	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
KLEINWORT BENSON UNIT TRUSTS				
Dealers: 0171 956 7354				
Income Trusts				
Bond Income	180.40	193.70†	- 0.50	7.03
Euro Pfw Inc	108.20	115.10	- 4.80	2.75
-do- Accum	108.20	115.10	- 4.80	2.75
Gilt Yield	118.50	125.00†	- 0.50	6.47
Global Income	234.10	249.60	- 8.40	3.30
High Yield	165.90	176.50†	- 6.30	5.28
-do- Accum	559.10	594.80†	-15.90	5.28
Money Market	99.37	99.37†	+ 0.09	5.47
Smllr Cos Dlv	66.46	70.70	- 2.51	3.66
Tomorrows Co Ex Acc	10.090	10.230	- 0.16	.
Capital Growth Trusts				
Amer Smllr Cos	148.70	158.20	- 8.70	
Asian Growth	308.20	327.90	-11.10	
-do- Accum	362.20	385.30	-13.20	
North American	110.00	117.00	- 7.70	..
European Special	141.70	150.70	- 6.20	1.10
European	190.10	202.20	- 9.50	0.48
-do- Accum	251.80	267.90	-13.10	0.48
Global Eqty Inc	123.20	130.80†	- 3.60	2.13

	Sell	Buy	Wkly +/-	Yld %
MALDON UNIT TRUST MGRS LTD				
0131 222 4242				
Maldon General	182.40	185.30	..	3.33
MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST LTD				
0800 363432				
High Inc #	94.67	97.60	- 0.42	.
M & S Inv Pfolio	184.30	190.00	- 4.00	2.37
-do- Accum	220.30	227.30	- 4.70	2.37
UK Sel Pfolio	167.00	172.20	- 2.70	2.24
-do- Accum	203.30	209.60	- 3.30	2.24
UK 100 Cos	125.40	125.40†	- 2.40	2.49
-do- Accum	128.60	128.60†	- 2.40	2.49
MARLBOROUGH FUND MGRS LTD				
01204 364 842				
Managed Tst	70.65	75.16	- 1.34	3.55
MARTIN CURRIE UNIT TRUSTS LTD				
0131 479 4646				
Intl Income	88.28	93.72†	- 1.75	3.21
European	109.40	116.10	- 4.70	0.81
Income #	88.75	94.21	- 2.24	3.31

RACING: PIPE AND NICHOLSON LEAD WAY WITH DOUBLES

Martha's Son makes champion progress

By Julian Muscat

FURTHER evidence emerged at Aintree yesterday that David Nicholson and Martin *Pipe have elevated* the art of training to a dimension beyond their contemporaries. The two men saddled a double apiece but the banner performance *came courtesy* of Martha's Son, the redoubtable star of Tim Forster's stable.

Martha's Son does not do anything by halves. Having almost blundered his way out of the Mumm Melling Chase at the first fence, he went on to fly the last before stretching clear like a hound on the scent.

In *stark* contrast to the three-mile chasers, the speedier division is awash with talents like Strong Promise, Viking Flagship and Ask Tom. Martha's Son *now bestrides it* like a giant, his foes unable to counter his sharp acceleration.

"The horse has two speeds," Forster said. "One is when he idles at the back, the other when he presses the fireburner and off he goes." Watching him scythe down Strong Promise made it hard to believe he was all but pensioned with buckled tendons 11 months ago. It is *tantalising to envisage* him stepping up to three miles for next season's King George VI Chase.

In that event Martha's Son *may meet* Cyborgo, who, after contesting the Cheltenham Gold Cup, appreciated the drop in class afforded by the Mumm Mildmay Novices' Chase. If Cyborgo *remains* removed from the top flight, educational outings like these can only enhance his progress. Jumping flawlessly under Richard Dunwoody, he carried too many guns for The Last Fling.

"He is a real professional; very tough and very clever," Dunwoody later testified. "The ground was a little on the dead side, which suited him." They have done a fine job on the ground here and should really be congratulated." Earlier victorious aboard Sanmartino in the opener, Dunwoody *underlined* his own appreciation with a virtuoso display of front-running aboard Unguided Missile, a game winner of the Perrier Jouet Handicap Chase.

Jamie Osborne, due to ride the fancied Grand National contender, Suny Bay, must first receive clearance from the *racecourse doctor at midday.* Osborne gave up his remaining rides after a tumble from Bear Claw in the Mumm Mildmay Novices' Chase left him feeling unwell. But Charlie Brooks, who trains Suny Bay, expects his jockey to be passed fit. Jamie Evans, booked for Mugoni Beach, faces a similar examination on his injured knee.

Bahhare will miss next month's Pertemps 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket. The *John Dunlop-trained* colt pulled up lame when working last month and was unable to *resume his* classic preparations this week. Ladbrokes make Shamikh the new 3-1 favourite.

MARC ASPLAND

Mr Boston clears the Chair in the Fox Hunters' Chase, won by Blue Cheek

RICHARD EVANS

Nap: ANTONIN
(3.45 Aintree)
Next best: Guinda
(4.35 Aintree)

COMPREHENSIVE GRAND NATIONAL FORM GUIDE

MASTER OATS

Feb 16, Punchestown: see Antonin.

Feb 11, 1996, Leopardstown, yielding to soft: (12-0) 6l 2nd to Imperial Call (12-0) with Nuaffe pulled up 10th (3m, grade I ch, £50,258, 8 ran).

NAHTHEN LAD

Mar 13, Cheltenham: see Go Ballistic.

Feb 15, Chepstow, soft: (11-12) 6l 2nd to Air Shot (11-0) (2m 3l 110yd, ch, £6,775, 5 ran).

Jan 18, Haydock: see Avro Anson.

LO STREGONE

Feb 22, Haydock: see Suny Bay.

Jan 17, *Kelso,* good: (11-11) 12l 3rd to Seven Towers (10-0) with Pink Gin (10-0) 104l 11th and Full Of Oats (10-0) fell 17th (4m, hcap ch, £20,903, 13 ran).

Nov 30, 1996, Newbury, good (11-0) 18l 3rd to Coome Hill (10-0) with Dextra Dove (10-1) 33½l 5th, Feathered Gale (10-11) further 18l 6th and Grange Brake (9-12) 3rd when unseating last (3m 2l 110yd, grade III hcap ch, £48,283, 11 ran).

SUNY BAY

Feb 22, Haydock, good: (10-8) beat Into The Red (10-0) *19l with Lo Stregone (10-9) 49½l 5th (3m 4l 110yd,* grade III hcap ch, £50,256, 6 ran).

Nov 20, 1996, Kempton, good to soft: (11-7) 38l 5th to Trying Again (11-3) (2m 4l 110yd, hcap ch, £4,715, 7 ran).

Mar 23, 1996, Newbury, soft: (11-12) beat Do Be Brief (10-8) 13l with Turning Trix (11-3) 16l 3rd (3m, hcap ch, £7,064, 7 ran)

FEATHERED GALE

Mar 2, Leopardstown: see Wylde Hide.

Dec 27, Leopardstown: see New Co.

Nov 30, 1996, Newbury: see Lo Stregone

AVRO ANSON

Feb 1, Sandown: *see Dextra Dove.*

Jan 18, Haydock, good to firm: (10-7) ¾l 3rd to Jodami (11-10) with Nahthen Lad (11-4) pulled up before 14th and Grange Brake (10-7) pulled up before 4 out (3m, grade II hcap ch, £24,776, 6 ran)

BELMONT KING

Mar 8, Chepstow, good to soft (12-0) 7l 2nd to Giventime (10-01) with Spuffington (10-2) 6l 3rd, General Wolfe (11-12) distnce 4th, Bishops Hall (12-0) pulled up 3 out (3m 2l 110yd, hcap ch, £8,432, 7 ran)

Feb 2, Leopardstown, good to yielding, (12-0) pulled up 3 out to Danoli (12-0) (3m, grade I ch, £62,500, 8 ran).

Dec 7, 1996, Chepstow, good to soft: (10-8) beat Trying Again *(11-1) 1¼l with Grange Brake (10-5) 16½l 5th* (3m, hcap ch, £18,822, 7 ran)

BUCKBOARD BOUNCE

Mar 29, Carlisle, good to soft: (12-0) 33l 8th of 12 to Swanbister (10-9) (2m 4l, hcap hdle, £2,885, 12 ran)

BISHOPS HALL

Mar 8, Chepstow: see Belmont King

Mar 30, 1996, Liverpool: see Antonin

LORD GYLLENE

Mar 15, Uttoxeter, good (11-10) 7l 2nd to Seven Towers (10-8) with Killeshin (10-13) further 12l 4th and *Scribbler (10-0) fell 3 out (4m 2l, grade III, hcap ch,* £30,867, 10 *ran)*

Feb 8, Uttoxeter, good: (11-9) beat Mudahim (11-2) 8l 4th (4m 2l, hcap ch, £24,137, 9 ran)

WYLDE HIDE

Mar 2, Leopardstown, soft: (11-9) beat Moralee River *(10-12) 4½l with Feathered Gale (12-0) 30½l last (2m* 5l, hcap ch, £6,850, 5 ran).

Dec 27, 1996, Leopardstown: see New Co

Mar 30, 1996, Liverpool: see Antonin

DEXTRA DOVE

Feb 22, Kempton, good: (11-3) pulled up 15th to Mudahim (10-2) (3m, grade III, hcap ch, £30,380, 9 ran).

Feb 1, Sandown, good to firm, (11-2) beat Northern Hide (10-6) 2½l with Avro Anson (11-8) unseating rider 11th *and Go Ballistic (11-0) fell 18th (3m 110yd, hcap ch,* £24,059, 6 ran)

ANTONIN

Feb 16, Punchestown, soft, (10-0) beat King Of The Gales (10-6) distance with Master Oats (12-0) pulled up 3 out (3m 2l, hcap ch, £20,500, 9 ran).

Dec 27, 1996, Leopardstown: see New Co.

Nov 7, 1996, Clonmel, yielding to soft: (12-0) 25½l 5th to Royal Mountbrowne (11-7) with Nuaffe (12-0) 36l 8th (2m 4l, grade II, ch, £12,900, 8 ran)

Mar 30, 1996, Liverpool, good (10-0) 49l 8th to Rough Quest (10-7) with Over The Stream (10-0) 87l 13th, Bishops Hall (10-1) unseated 1st and Wylde Hide (10-*0) unseated 24th (4m 4l, grade III, hcap ch, 27 ran).*

SMITH'S BAND

Mar 1, Newbury: see Turning Trix.

Jan 20, 1996, Haydock, soft: (10-7) ½l 2nd to Scotton Banks (11-6) (3m, grade II, hcap ch, £18,570, 6 ran)

NEW CO

Mar 12, Cheltenham: see Northern Hide.

Jan 23, Gowran Park, good: (10-5) 3l 3rd to Couldnt Be Better (12-0) with Back Bar (10-0) 33l 7th and Nuaffe (10-4) 44l 10th (3m, grade II, hcap ch, 14 ran)

Dec 27, 1996, Leopardstown, good to yielding, (10-6) beat Wylde Hide (11-2) 1l with Back Bar (10-5) 8¼l 4th, *Antonin (11-7) 14½l 5th, Feathered Gale (11-9) 29l 7th* and Nuaffe (11-6) fell (3m, grade II, hcap ch, 17 ran)

GO BALLISTIC

Mar 13, Cheltenham, good: (12-0) 15½l 4th to Mr Mulligan (12-0) with Nahthen Lad (12-0) pulled up 2 out (3m 2l 110yd, grade I, ch, £134,810, 14 ran)

Feb 1, Sandown: see Dextra Dove

Dec 21, 1996, Ascot, good to firm, (10-0) beat Unguided Missile (11-11) 1¾l with Turning Trix (10-0) 34¾l 4th and Dextra Dove (10-9) pulled up last (3m 110yd, hcap ch, £24,379, 9 ran)

Nov 2, 1996, Ascot, good to firm (10-4) beat Straight Talk (11-2) 8l (3m 110yd, hcap ch, £8,013, 5 ran)

GENERAL WOLFE

Mar 8, Chepstow: see Belmont King.

Feb 21, Haydock, good to soft: (12-0) beat McGregor The Third (11-4) neck (3m, hcap ch, £4,531, 7 ran).

Apr 20, 1996, Ayr, soft: *(10-2) 11l 2nd to Moorcroft Boy* (10-2) with Lo Stregone (10-13) 29l 4th (4m 1l, grade III, hcap ch, £38,590, 20 ran).

GLEMOT

Dec 13, 1996, Cheltenham, good (11-8) 10l 2nd to Yorkshire Gale (11-10) (3m 1l, hcap ch, £12,498, 2 ran)

Nov 23, 1996, Aintree, good (10-4) 11½l 3rd to Into The Red (10-0) with Straight Talk (10-0) unseated rider 4 out (3m 3l, hcap ch, £25,666, 8 ran)

Nov 9, 1996, Wincanton, good (11-12) 10l 2nd to Coome Hill (11-7) with Straight Talk (11-3) 22l 5th (3m 1l 110yd, hcap ch, £13,888, 9 ran)

VALIANT WARRIOR

Mar 22, Newbury, good to firm: (11-4) 3½l 3rd to Senor El Betrutti (11-13) (3m, hcap ch, £6,853, 4 ran)

KILLESHIN

Mar 15, Uttoxeter: see Lord Gyllene

Mar 1, Warwick: see Full Of Oats.

MASTER BOSTON

DOUBTFUL

STRAIGHT TALK

Nov 23, 1996, Aintree: see Glemot.

Nov 9, 1996, Wincanton: see Glemot

Nov 2, 1996, Ascot: see Go Ballistic.

NUAFFE

Jan 23, Gowran Park: see New Co

Dec 27, 1996, Leopardstown: see New Co

Nov 7, 1996, Clonmel: see Antonin

Feb 11, 1996, Leopardstown: see Master Oats

NORTHERN HIDE

Mar 12, Cheltenham, good to firm: (10-13) 24l 9th to Terao (10-7) with New Co (11-8) 33l 10th (2m 4l 110yd, hcap ch, £30,044, 13 ran)

Feb 1, Sandown: see Dextra Dove

TURNING TRIX

Mar 11, Cheltenham, good, (11-4) beat *Sister* Stephanie (11-2) head with River Mandate (11-2) 1l 3rd and Smith's Band (12-0) pulled up 3 out (3m, hcap ch, £4,627, 5 *ran).*

Dec 21, 1996, Ascot: see Go Ballistic

Mar 23, 1996, Newbury: see Suny Bay.

RIVER MANDATE

Mar 11, Cheltenham: see Grange Brake

Mar 1, Newbury: see Turning Trix

GRANGE BRAKE

Mar 11, Cheltenham, good (10-4) 45l 10th to Flyer's Nap (11-2) with River Mandate (10-2) fell 12th (3m 1l, hcap ch, £34,414, 14 ran).

Jan 18, Haydock: see Avro Anson.

Dec 7, 1996, Chepstow: see Belmont King.

Nov 30, 1996, Newbury: see Lo Stregone

EVANGELICA

Jan 16, Taunton, good to firm (11-6) 2½l 2nd to Woodlands Genhire (10-0) with Killeshin (11-7) pulled up 17th (4m 2l 110yd, hcap ch, £6,938, 10 ran)

BACK BAR

Mar 16, Leopardstown, good, (11-3) distance 4th to Moscow Express (11-13) (2m 4f, hdle, £3,083, 4 ran)

Jan 23, Gowran Park: see New Co.

Dec 27, 1996, Leopardstown: see New Co.

DAKYNS BOY

Feb 15, Chepstow: see Spuffington

Feb 1, Chepstow: see Full Of Oats

Dec 7, 1996, Chepstow, good to soft, (11-2) 2½l 2nd to Samlee (10-4) with Full Of Oats (10-10) sh hd 3rd (3m 2l 110yd, hcap ch, £7,126, 7 ran)

SCRIBBLER

Mar 15, Uttoxeter: see Lord Gyllene.

Jan 15, Chepstow: see Spuffington

CELTIC ABBEY

Mar 13, Cheltenham, good: (12-0) 19¾l 4th to Fantus *(12-0) (3m 2l 110yd, hunter ch, £19,868, 18 ran)*

FULL OF OATS

Mar 1, Warwick, good (10-13) 1½l 3rd to Jurassic Classic with Killeshin (11-10) 7l 4th (3m 5f, hcap ch, 9 ran)

Feb 1, Chepstow, good: (10-11) 11l 3rd to Flyer's Nap (11-7) with Dakyns Boy (11-1) 14½l 4th, Killeshin (11-10) 43½l 5th (3m 5l 110yd, hcap ch, £10,202, 8 ran)

Jan 17, Kelso: see Lo Stregone

CAMELOT KNIGHT

Mar 11, Cheltenham, good: (10-6) 29½l 6th to King Lucifer (11-5) (3m 1l, hcap ch, £21,363, 11 ran)

MUGONI BEACH

Feb 21, Southwell, good: (12-0) distance 5th to Father Sky (11-7) *(3m 110yd, good)*

PLASTIC SPACEAGE

Feb 15, Chepstow: see Spuffington.

OVER THE STREAM

Mar 17, Newcastle, good to firm (12-0) 89l 7th to *Golden Fiddle (10-6) (3m, hcap ch, £2,863, 7 ran)*

Mar 30, 1996, Aintree: see Antonin

DON'T LIGHT UP

Apr 23, 1996, Chepstow, soft (11-11) pulled up 17th behind Holy Sting (10-0) (3m 2l 110yd, hcap ch, £4,145, 20 ran)

PINK GIN

Jan 17, Kelso: see Lo Stregone.

SPUFFINGTON

Mar 8, Chepstow: see Belmont King

Feb 15, Chepstow, soft: (11-2) 15¼l 3rd to Giventime (11-0) with Plastic Spaceage (11-4) 26l 6th, Dakyns Boy (11-11) 65l 11th and Scribbler (11-10) 75l 12th (3m 2l 110yd, hcap ch, £3,716, 16 ran)

Selection: SUNY BAY

AINTREE

THUNDERER

2.00 **ROSENCRANTZ** (nap)	3.45 General Wolfe
2.20 Arctic Kinsman	4.35 Linton Rocks
2.55 Make A Stand	5.15 Lord Lamb

The Times Private Handicapper's top rating: 3.45 **SUNY BAY.**

GUIDE TO OUR IN-LINE RACECARD

101 113143 GOOD TIMES 13 (BF,F,G,S) (Mrs D Robinson) B Hall 12-0 .... B West (7) 88

Racecard number. Six-figure form (F — fell. P — pulled up. U — unseated rider. B — brought down. S — slipped up. R — refused. D — disqualified). Horse's name. Days since last outing. F if flat. (B — blinkers. V — visor. H — hood. E — Eyeshield. C — course winner. D — distance winner. CD — course and distance winner. BF — beaten favourite in latest race). Going on which horse has won (F — firm, good to firm, hard. G — good. S — soft, good to soft, heavy). Owner in brackets. Trainer. Age and weight. Rider plus any allowance. The Times Private Handicapper's rating.

GOING: GOOD — TOTE JACKPOT MEETING — SIS

1.45 CORDON BLEU HANDICAP HURDLE

BBC1

(£19,870. 2m 110yd) (19 runners)

101	000610	DREAMS END 5F (D,F,G,S) (T Price) P Bowen 9-11-10	L Aspell (3)	97
102	32015-0	STOMPIN 23 (CD,G,S) (M Broughton) Miss H Knight 6-11-10	J Culloty	90
103	66624-P	CLIFTON BEAT 56 (D,G,S) (D O'Connor) P Hobbs 6-11-9	C F Swan	92
104	11513P	*DIRECT ROUTE 24 (D,F,G,S) (C Heron) H Johnson 6-11-8*	*A Dobbin*	*91*
105	1-10050	ZABADI 25 (CD,G,S) (Lady Harris) D Nicholson 5-11-8	R Johnson	95
106	F1F-F16	EDELWEIS DU MOULIN 56 (D,BF,G,S) (R Ogden) G Richards 5-11-5	P Carberry	94
107	13320F	HAMILTON SILK 14 (D,BF,F,G) (Elite Racing) M Pipe 5-11-2	J Osborne	95
108	315-F03	SHANKAR 14 (D,G,S) *(International Plywood) D Nicholson 6-10-12*	*Mr R Thornton (5)*	82
109	114110	SHINING EDGE 28 (D,F,G,S) (G Graham) T Easterby 5-10-9	L Wyer	94
110	2-1221	SECRET SPRING 78 (D,F,G) (M George) P Hedger 5-10-9	M Richards	98
111	04-41F2	TEJANO GOLD 4 (D,BF,G,S) (P Bradley) P Bradley 7-10-3	S Wynne	97
112	430442	KAITAK 43 (D,G) (C Murphy) J Carr 6-10-2	*F Leahy (3)*	97
113	11-3415	FORESTAL 28 (D,G,S) (S Griffiths) S Griffiths 5-10-1	T J Murphy	92
114	053-130	MOST EQUAL 70 (D,F,S) (H Kirpalani) M Pipe 7-10-0	G Supple (5)	91
115	01-1133	PRIZEFIGHTER 32F (D,BF,F) (Diamond Racing) J Eyre 6-10-0	B Storey	90
116	12F3P1	ROSENCRANTZ *10 (D,F,G) (L Fulford) Miss V Williams 5-10-0 (7ex).*	*N Williamson*	[illegible]
117	36B02-3	AMLAH 224 (B,F) (In Touch Racing) P Hobbs 5-10-0	B Powell	89
118	F24U46	BLAIR CASTLE 14 (D,F) (Highflyers) G Balding 6-10-0	B Fenton	84
119	36010-4	FROZEN SEA 7F (F) (Oaks Partners) G Enright 6-10-0	J R Kavanagh	91

Long handicap: Most Equal 9-13, Prizefighter 9-13, Rosencrantz 9-13, Amlah 9-10, Blair Castle 9-10, Frozen Sea 9-8

BETTING: 5-1 Secret Spring, 6-1 Rosencrantz, 7-1 Edelweis du Moulin, 8-1 Hamilton Silk, 10-1 Forestal, Shankar, Shining Edge, 12-1 others

1996: STOMPIN 5-10-13 J Culloty (8-1) Miss H Knight 17 ran

FORM FOCUS

DREAMS END beat Romancer 8l in 8-runner grade B K & J Pike & Sons Kingwell Hurdle at Wincanton (2m, good) with ZABADI *(2lb better off) 7½l* and short-head 5th. EDELWEIS DU MOULIN beat Tom Brodie 5l in 9-runner handicap hurdle at Wetherby (2m, good) on penultimate start. HAMILTON SILK best effort this term 9l 2nd of 18 to Make A Stand in grade III Tote Gold Trophy Handicap Hurdle at Newbury (2m 110yd, good) with DIRECT ROUTE (1lb better off) 1l 3rd. EDELWEIS DU MOULIN (2lb worse off) about 8½l 6th, ZABADI (10lb better off) 37½l 15th and CLIFTON BEAT (8lb better off) pulled up before last. SHANKAR ¾l and neck 3rd of 7 to Kadastrof in handicap hurdle at Newbury *(2m 110yd, good)* with BLAIR CASTLE (2lb better off) about 15l 6th and HAMILTON SILK fell 2 out. SECRET SPRING beat Sharpical 2½l in 13-runner novice hurdle at Kempton (2m, good to firm). *FORESTAL 7¾l 5th of 18 to Carlito Brigante in* handicap hurdle at Sandown (2m 110yd, good) with SHINING EDGE (1lb better off) 24¼l 13th. ROSENCRANTZ beat Mister Rm 7l in 6-runner handicap *hurdle at Ascot (2m 110yd, good)*

Selection: SECRET SPRING

2.20 MARTELL RED RUM CHASE

BBC1

(Grade II: limited handicap: £25,780: 2m) (10 runners)

201	121F-U2	ARCTIC KINSMAN 42 (CD,G,S) (Mrs R Hambro) N Twiston-Davies 9-12-0	C Llewellyn	90
202	3F8126	LORD DORCET 24 (D,F,G,S) (J Hogg) J Charlton 7-11-4	J Osborne	93
203	224-434	TIME WON'T WAIT 23 (CD,F,G) (Old Berks Partners) R Phillips 8-11-4	J Railton	92
204	111123	CELIBATE 25 *(D,F,G,S) (Stamford Bridge Partners)* C Mann 6-11-3	R Dunwoody	95
205	36PF12	ELZOBA 23 (B,D,S) (D Johnson) M Pipe 5-11-2	C Maude	90
206	12113U	MISTER ODDY 23 (D,G,S) (Mrs R Hill) J King 11-10-13	J Culloty	[illegible]
207	2-11212	JATHIB 59 (D,BF,F,G) (Crown Pkg) Mrs M Jones 6-10-13	D Byrne	91
208	135316	POLITICAL TOWER 23 *(D,F,G,S) (G Nixon) R Nixon 10-10-12*	A Dobbin	90
209	25-4124	WEE RIVER 35 (D,F,G,S) (S Graham) G Moore 8-10-10	J Callaghan	96
210	121343	DOWN THE FELL 63 (C,F,G,S) (Mrs S Johnson) H Johnson 8-10-7	N Williamson	90

Long handicap: Down The Fell 10-5.

BETTING: 3-1 Arctic Kinsman, 4-1 Celibate, 5-1 Elzoba, 6-1 Lord Dorcet, 7-1 Jathib, 8-1 Mister Oddy, 10-1 others.

1996: ARCTIC KINSMAN 8-11-0 C Llewellyn (13-2) N Twiston-Davies 10 ran

FORM FOCUS

ARCTIC KINSMAN 3l 2nd of 4 to Viking Flagship in conditions chase at Kempton (2m, good) LORD DORCET 17l last of 6 to Martha's Son in grade I Queen Mother Champion Chase at Cheltenham (2m, good to firm)

CELIBATE 6½l 3rd of 9 to Or Royal in grade I Guinness Arkle Challenge Trophy Novice Chase at Cheltenham (2m, good) *ELZOBA 2l 2nd of 16 to* Uncle Ernie in handicap chase at Cheltenham (2m 110yd, good) with TIME WON'T WAIT (5lb better off) 3½l 4th. POLITICAL TOWER (7lb better off) 3l and neck 6th and MISTER ODDY (9lb better off) unseated rider 10th. JATHIB 5l 2nd of 2 to Amancio in novice chase at Ascot (2m, good to firm) *POLITICAL TOWER beat Regal Romper 6l in* 3-runner handicap chase at Wetherby (2m, heavy) on penultimate start.

WEE RIVER about 20½l 4th of 8 to Freddey in handicap chase at Doncaster (2m 3l 110yd, good)

Selection: CELIBATE

2.55 MARTELL AINTREE HURDLE

BBC1

(Grade I: £40,750: 2m 4f) (7 runners)

301	143-230	BIMSEY 25 (C,D,F,G,S) (A Rizzi) R Akehurst 7-11-7	M A Fitzgerald	87
302	11-111P	LARGE ACTION 25 (D,BF,F,G,S) (B Stewart-Brown) O Sherwood 9-11-7	J Osborne	96
303	*511111*	MAKE A STAND 25 *(F,G,S) (P Deal) M Pipe 6-11-7*	C Maude	[illegible]
304	0-54200	PRIDWELL 23 (D,F,G,S) (Jones, Berstock and Fleet) M Pipe 7-11-7	R Dunwoody	88
305	121113	SPACE TRUCKER 25 (F,G,S) (Mrs E Queally) Mrs J Harrington (Ire) 6-11-7	J Shortt	93
306	4-1240F	URUBANDE 23 (CD,F,G,S) (M St Quinton) A P O'Brien (Ire) 7-11-7	C F Swan	77
307	*F32-11P*	*DOUBLE SYMPHONY 23 (B,D,G,S) (A Pye-Jeary) C Brooks 9-11-2*	*G Bradley*	*66*

BETTING: 6-4 Make A Stand, 9-4 Large Action, 7-2 Space Trucker, 10-1 Pridwell, Urubande, 12-1 others.

1995: URUBANDE 6-11-7 C F Swan (100-30) A P O'Brien (Ire) 9 ran

FORM FOCUS

LARGE ACTION beat PRIDWELL 1¾l in 4-runner grade I Cleeve Hurdle at Cheltenham (2m 5f 110yd, good) on penultimate start. MAKE A STAND completed five-timer beat Theatreworld 5l in 17-runner grade I Smurfit Champion Hurdle Challenge Trophy at Cheltenham (2m 110yd, good) with SPACE TRUCKER ¾l 3rd, PRIDWELL 6¼l 7th, BIMSEY 22l 13th and LARGE ACTION pulled up after 3rd. SPACE TRUCKER beat Seniosa Star 2l in 11-runner handicap hurdle at Leopardstown (2m, soft) on penultimate start.

URUBANDE 42l 8th of 9 to What A Question in grade II Boyne E B F Hurdle at Navan (2m, yielding) on penultimate start. DOUBLE SYMPHONY beat Dancing Paddy 3½l in 5-runner grade II Mitsubishi Shogun Game Spirit Chase at Newbury (2m 1f, good) on penultimate start.

Selection: MAKE A STAND (nap)

3.45 MARTELL GRAND NATIONAL CHASE

BBC1

(Grade III, handicap: £178,146: 4m 4f) (40 runners)

RUNNERS AND RIDERS — SEE PAGE 42

4.35 CHIVAS REGAL AMATEUR RIDERS NOVICES HANDICAP CHASE

(£7,888: 2m 4f) (13 runners)

501	6-P3121	COLONEL IN CHIEF 7 (S) (R Ogden) G Richards 7-11-13	A Ogden (7)	83
502	B31111	GARNWIN 10 (D,F,G) (Promot Heat-Treatment) N Henderson 7-11-10	C Vigors (5)	93
503	6-1225F	GUINDA 25 (F,G) (Mrs J Powell) N Twiston-Davies 7-11-7	M Rimell (3)	90
504	U21F05	THE REVEREND BERT 14 (G) (Billie's Club) G Balding 9-11-0	O Ellwood (7)	97
505	2214U3	DREAM RIDE 16 (D,BF,F,G,S) (C Clarke) D Nicholson 7-11-0	R Thornton (5)	95
506	305111	INDIAN JOCKEY 31 (F,G,S) (S Mercer) M Pipe 5-10-13	P Fenton	89
507	23/6201	LINTON ROCKS 15 (F,G,S) (Mrs Townshend) T Thomson Jones 8-10-11	S Sporborg	90
508	0-21522	GOLDENSWIFT 21 (BF,G,S) (Mrs S Watts) G Balding 7-10-5	C Bonner (3)	[illegible]
509	5U1222	NICHOLAS PLANT 28 (D,BF,F,S) (Mrs M Paterson) J Goldie 8-10-5	D McPhail (7)	95
510	344221	DECYBORG 5 (D,F) (T Neill) M Pipe 6-10-5	R Wakley (7)	87
511	2UF11F	GAELIC BLUE 5 (D,BF,G) (T Hemmings) Mrs S Smith 7-10-5	S Durack (7)	90
512	354441	LE DENSTAN 7 (D,F,S) (L Wright) Mrs D Thomson 10-10-5	T J Barry (7)	88
513	22431F	AFTER THE FOX 18 (BF,F,G) (Mrs R Blackburn) N Hawke 10-10-5	J Tizzard (7)	84

Long handicap: Nicholas Plant 9-13, Decyborg 9-13, Gaelic Blue 9-3, Le Denstan 9-2, After The Fox 9-1

BETTING: 4-1 Linton Rocks, 5-1 Garnwin, 6-1 Colonel In Chief, 7-1 Indian Jockey, 8-1 Decyborg, Goldenswift, 10-1 others.

1996: ROCKET RUN 8-10-0 P Henley (10-1) Miss L Russell 11 ran

FORM FOCUS

COLONEL IN CHIEF beat Carole's Crusader 2l in novice chase at Carlisle (3m, good to soft) GARNWIN beat Frazer Island ½l in novice handicap chase at Ascot (3m 4f, good). GUINDA best effort *2½l 2nd to Harvest View in novice chase at* Uttoxeter (2m 4f, good). INDIAN JOCKEY beat The Secret Grey 9l in novice chase at Bangor (2m, good to soft). LINTON ROCKS beat Harcham Boy 2l in novice chase at Newbury (3m, good to firm) GOLDENSWIFT neck 2nd to Tellicherry in novice handicap chase at Uttoxeter (2m 5f, good). NICHOLAS PLANT 3½l 2nd of 6 to Kalajo in novice chase at Ayr (3m 1f, soft). GAELIC BLUE beat Milwaukee 19l in novice handicap chase at Market Rasen (3m 1f, good) on penultimate start.

Selection: GARNWIN

5.15 MARTELL CHAMPION STANDARD NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE

(Grade II: £10,275: 2m 110yd) (16 runners)

601	10-11	LORD LAMB 24 (D,F) (A Sharratt) Mrs M Reveley 5-11-12	G Lee	–
602	11	NOISY MINER 16 (D,F,G) (Mrs R Stark) D Nicholson 5-11-12	R Massey	–
603	21	BIG PERKS 67 (D,F) (P Perkins) P Dalton 5-11-8	Mr R Thornton	–
604	5-514	CLINKING 59 (D,F) (G Harwood) Mrs A Perrett 6-11-8	Mrs A Perrett	–
605	51	EASBY BLUE 31 (D,G) (G Orchard) S Kettlewell 5-11-8	Mr C Bonner	–
606	1	GO NATIVE 19 (D,F) (T Hemmings) Mrs S Smith 5-11-8	R Wilkinson	–
607	*1*	*MOUNTAIN STORM 79 (D,F) (A Speelman) N Henderson 5-11-8*	T Hagger	–
608	11	MAYDAY LAUREN 11 (D,F,G) (B Racing) A Bailey 5-11-7	S Melrose	–
609	2	CARLINGFORD TYKE 35 (Jockingo Racing) T Carr 5-11-4	C McCormack	–
610	30	CHASING THE MOON 72 (Renrung) G Balding 5-11-4	Mr A Balding	–
611	*2*	*NORMANIA 16 (M Pinto) Miss S Edwards 5-11-4*	Mr T Hills	–
612	1	ZAFFARAN RUN 14 (G) (Mrs M Devine) M Hourigan (Ire) 5-11-3	Mr P Fenton	–
613	013	LANDLER 19 (D,G) (Bradfor Developments) J Norton 4-11-2	E Callaghan	–
614	41	MAZILEO 7 (F) (Mrs H Parrott) I Williams 4-11-2	F Bogle	–
615	*01*	*SOCIETY TIMES 58 (D,F) (A McPherson) D Nolan 4-11-2*	F Leahy	–
616	4	THE LIGHTMAKER 42 (Deore Lighting) S Earle 4-10-12	L Aspell	–

BETTING: 7-2 Noisy Miner, 4-1 Mountain Storm, 5-1 Zaffaran Run, 6-1 Lord Lamb, 10-1 Go Native, 12-1 Mayday Lauren, Mazileo, 16-1 others

1996: BURN OUT 4-10-12 L Aspell (15-2) J Pearce 15 ran

FORM FOCUS

NOISY MINER beat NORMANIA (1lb better off) 1¼l at Wincanton (2m, good to firm). CLINKING beat Tanglefoot Tipple 7l at Kempton (2m, good to firm) *EASBY BLUE beat Going Primitive 7l at* Catterick (2m, good) GO NATIVE beat Wynyard Knight 1½l at Newcastle (2m, good to firm) MOUNTAIN STORM beat Shebang 5l at Ludlow (2m, good to firm) MAYDAY LAUREN beat Mary *Leader 3l at Southwell (AW, 2m)*

Selection: MOUNTAIN STORM

COURSE SPECIALISTS

TRAINERS	Wnrs	Rnrs	%	JOCKEYS	Winners	Rides	%
K Bailey	7	27	25.9	*A Dobbin*	7	25	28.0
G Balding	5	22	22.7	R Garritty	4	18	22.2
D Nicholson	13	63	20.6	G Bradley	6	29	20.7
Mrs M Reveley	5	25	20.0	N Williamson	9	48	18.8
N Twiston-Davies	9	52	17.3	P Niven	5	27	18.5

Lord Dorcet can take the honours

AINTREE

BBC1

1.45: Rosencrantz won with *considerable* ease at Ascot ten days ago and a 7lb penalty may not be sufficient to stop Venetia Williams's fast ground-loving runner from figuring in the finish again. Blessed with a high cruising speed, he appreciates a *fast-run* race and possesses a potent turn of foot. *Edelweis Du Moulin* has claims on his Wetherby victory in February, but **Secret Spring** is the choice. A good second to Sanmartino at Kempton before *beating Sharpical, he will* love the conditions.

2.20: **Lord Dorcet**, who signed off last season with a good second to Ask Tom here, has continued to progress this term and was *far from disgraced* when finishing 17 lengths sixth to Martha's Son in the Queen Mother Champion Chase.

TODAY'S RACES ON TELEVISION

He was previously beaten by Mister Oddy at Sandown but is fancied to reverse the form on this track and ground. Jathib comes into *the race fresh* and has claims, while the lightly raced Elzoba is open to further improvement.

2.55: **Will Make A Stand**, who made all to win the Champion Hurdle, be so *effective over half a mile* further in this company? The evidence suggests he might. The Martin Pipe-trained runner won over a furlong short of today's trip at Stratford in October before recording a rare substandard effort over an extended 2½ miles at Uttoxeter in November. As a winner over a mile and a half on the Flat, he looks worth risking on this flat track against some questionable rivals. Large Action *will appreciate this trip but* he was pulled up early at Cheltenham which hardly increases confidence. Pridwell is a monkey, while *there are stamina doubts* about Space Trucker.

3.45: see page 48

RICHARD EVANS

BEVERLEY

THUNDERER

2.00 Loveyoumillions. 2.30 Three Arch Bridge. 3.00 Golden Mirage. 3.30 Westcourt Magic. 4.15 Cottage Prince. 4.45 Sandbaggedagain.

GOING: GOOD TO FIRM — DRAW: 5F, HIGH BEST — SIS

2.00 VALENTINES SELLING STAKES

(£2,338: 1m 3l 216yd) (12 runners)

1	(2)	121-	BRODESSA 1923 (C,F) Mrs M Reveley 11-9-4	K Darley	90
2	(1)	-343	BEDOUIN PRINCE 9 (D,G) Mrs L Stubbs 10-8-13	K Fallon	87
3	(4)	54/	CHARITY CRUSADER 354J (C,F) Mrs M Reveley 6-8-13	A Culhane	–
4	(5)	30/	JACKMANII 493J (F) J Berry 5-8-13	N Carlisle	–
5	(11)	-006	LOVEYOUMILLIONS 16 (F,S) N Tinkler 5-8-13	Pat Eddery	[illegible]
6	(9)	410-	PORTITE SOPHIE 257 (G) M Brittain 6-8-13	D Mernagh (7)	64
7	(10)	030-	RISKY ROSE 171J (D,F) R Hollinshead 5-8-13	D Griffiths (3)	69
8	(3)	300-	TTYFRAN 224 *(D,F) B Baugh 7-8-13*	*R Perham*	*61*
9	(8)	/00-	THE BLACK DUBH 203J J Quinn 4-8-12	J Quinn	–
10	(6)	254-	CHAMPAGNE WARRIOR 196 M Camacho 4-8-7	L Charnock	84
11	(7)	000-	PHILGEM 159 C Fairhurst 4-8-7	N Kennedy	84
12	*(12)*	*-000*	*SHIP'S DANCER 11 (B) E Incisa 4-8-7*	*Kim Tinkler*	*82*

7-4 Brodessa, 11-4 Loveyoumillions, 6-1 Champagne Warrior, 8-1 Charity Crusader, 10-1 Jackmanii, 14-1 Bedouin Prince, Risky Rose, 16-1 others.

2.30 BECHERS BROOK HANDICAP

(£3,287: 7l 100yd) (17)

1	(11)	00-0	MYBOTYE 16 (D,F,G) R Bastiman 4-10-0	H Bastiman (5)	90
2	(13)	60-0	LA VOLTA 15 (D,F) J Fitzgerald 4-9-13	J Fortune	83
3	(4)	2274	GENUINE JOHN 10 (D,G) J Parkes 4-9-11	R Cochrane	97
4	(9)	4061	*THREE ARCH BRIDGE 5 (B,CD,F,G) M Johnston 5-9-11 (6ex)*	J Weaver	95
5	(5)	300-	GODMERSHAM PARK 168 P Felgate 5-9-10	G Duffield	90
6	(3)	4080	SCENICRIS 9 (S) R Hollinshead 4-9-8	F Lynch (3)	89
7	*(14)*	*2113*	*RAMBO WALTZER 10 (D,F,G,S) D Nicholls 5-9-9*	Iona Wands (7)	[illegible]
8	(6)	600-	TINKLERS FOLLY 190 (D,F,G) R Whitaker 5-9-8	D McKeown	88
9	(10)	301-	POWER GAME 158 (B,F,G) J Berry 4-9-4	K Darley	90
10	*(1)*	*000-*	*SUPERPRIDE 158 (D,G,S) Mrs M Reveley 5-9-4*	A Culhane	93
11	(16)	4562	GULF SHAADI 10 (D,G) E Alston 5-9-3	S Drowne	98
12	(15)	6430	PERILOUS PLIGHT 10 (D,F,G) Mrs L Stubbs 6-9-3	K Fallon	89
13	(8)	0-04	SERAPE 39 Mrs L Stubbs 4-9-2	J F Egan	85
14	*(12)*	*000-*	*EURO SCEPTIC 163 (B,CD,F) T Easterby 5-9-0*	R Havlin (3)	93
15	(17)	030-	EDGAR KIRBY 289 P Harris 6-8-11	Pat Eddery	85
16	(7)	010-	THATCHED 151 (CD,F) R Barr 7-8-9	K Sked (7)	90
17	(2)	4550	LACHESIS 42 (B) D Shaw 4-8-8	C Teague (3)	90

5-1 Three Arch Bridge, 6-1 Rambo Waltzer, 7-1 Gulf Shaadi, 10-1 *Genuine John,* Power Game, 14-1 Scenicris, 16-1 others.

3.00 CHAIR MAIDEN AUCTION STAKES

(2-Y-O fillies: £2,742: 5f) (10)

1	*(1)*	*33*	*CLASSY CLEO 7 (BF) R Hannon 8-9*	*Pat Eddery*		94
2	(3)		GOLDEN MIRAGE M Channon 8-7	R Perham		–
3	(2)		ELLENBROOK J Berry 8-5	K Darley		–
4	(5)		SKIPPOOL CREEK T Easterby 8-5	M Birch		–
5	(7)	5	INCHALONG 9 M Brittain 8-4	G Bardwell		–
6	(4)		SUMMERSEAT C Fairhurst 8-3	D McKeown		–
7	(8)		COMPANYS GAMBLE B Baugh 8-2	A Culhane		–
8	(10)	2	HEAVENLY ABSTONE 9 (V,BF) P Evans 8-2	J F Egan		[illegible]
9	*(6)*		*BLITZ M W Easterby 8-1*	Dale Gibson		–
10	(9)		DAYNABEE N Tinkler 8-1	Kim Tinkler		–

2-1 Ellenbrook, 4-1 Classy Cleo, 5-1 Heavenly Abstone, Golden Mirage, 6-1 others.

3.30 EAST RIDING CONDITIONS STAKES

(£4,648: 5f) (6)

1	(4)	342-	BRAVE EDGE 174 (D,F,G) R Hannon 6-9-10	Pat Eddery	95
2	(6)	050-	WESTCOURT MAGIC 206 (CD,F,G) M W Easterby 4-9-10	K Darley	95
3	(2)	140-	BOLSHOI 168 (B,CD,F,G) J Berry 5-9-2	Emma O'Gorman	[illegible]
4	(5)	-120	CRETAN GIFT 15 (B,D,F,G) N Littmoden 6-9-2	T G McLaughlin	90
5	(3)	508-	YA MALAK 184 (CD,F,G,S) D Nicholls 6-9-2	Alex Greaves	98
6	(1)	02/	ANOTHERANNIVERSARY 638 (D,G) G Lewis 4-8-11	Paul Eddery	–

13-8 Brave Edge, 2-1 Bolshoi, 7-2 Westcourt Magic, 8-1 Ya Malak, 16-1 Anotheranniversary, 20-1 Cretan Gift

4.15 MELLING ROAD HANDICAP

(£3,162: 1m 1f 207yd) (19)

1	(12)	60-0	LILA PEDIGO 39 (D,G) Miss J Craze 4-10-0	S Webster	90
2	(18)	200-	KHABAR 179 R Bastiman 4-9-12	H Bastiman (5)	92
3	(9)	500-	AUGUSTAN 151 (D,F) S Gollings 6-9-7	Pat Eddery	90
4	(7)	000-	JEAN PIERRE 155 J Pearce 4-9-7	L Dettori	98
5	(8)	/00-	STOLEN MUSIC 197 R Barr 4-9-6	D McKeown	–
6	(19)	550-	SANDBLASTER 218 J Eyre 4-9-4	T Williams	89
7	(5)	500-	BRAMBLES WAY 19J (D,F) Mrs M Reveley 8-9-4	S Copp (5)	95
8	(15)	6325	AMBIDEXTROUS 7 (BF,F) E Alston 5-9-3	K Fallon	93
9	(13)	300-	CLUED UP 179 (V,D,F) P Evans 4-9-1	J F Egan	98
10	(4)	350-	SNOWY MANTLE 173 J Bethell 4-8-13	S Drowne	89
11	*(14)*	*00-6*	*ANISTOP 36 (G) J Eyre 5-8-13*	R Lappin	84
12	(2)	0-60	CUBAN REEF 46 (D,F,G) W Musson 5-8-12	J L Martinez	94
13	(16)	300-	FLYAWAY BLUES 58J Mrs M Reveley 5-8-11	A Culhane	90
14	(1)	0980	BOGART 19 (G) C Fairhurst 6-8-11	R Cochrane	[illegible]
15	(17)	353-	*COTTAGE PRINCE 126J J Quinn 4-8-9*	J Quinn	91.
16	(6)	/0-0	BLUE DOMAIN 22J (G) R Craggs 6-8-8	L Charnock	–
17	(10)	000-	SUMMER PRINCESS 29J G Fierro 4-8-8	G Duffield	–
18	(3)	0220	KILNAMARTYRA GIRL 16 (C,F) J Parkes 7-8-8	J Bramhill (5)	94
19	(11)	000-	PETIT FLORA 232 G Holmes 5-8-6	J Fortune	–

7-1 Ambidextrous, 8-1 Flyaway Blues, 9-1 Augustan, 10-1 Cuban Reef, 12-1 Jean Pierre, Brambles Way, Cottage Prince, 14-1 others.

4.45 GRAND NATIONAL DAY HANDICAP

(3-Y-O: £3,769: 1m 100yd) (14)

1	(13)	31-	OVER TO YOU 163 (D,G) E Dunlop 9-7	D O'Donohoe (3)	91
2	(7)	042-	KAFAF 185 J Gosden 9-5	L Dettori	90
3	(5)	33-5	KAISER KACHE 7 (F,S) K McAuliffe 9-3	J F Egan	90
4	(12)	4-46	GET THE POINT 7 R Hollinshead 9-1	K Fallon	91
5	(4)	1321	GLOBETROTTER 31 (D,G) M Johnston 8-13	J Weaver	[illegible]
6	(10)	33-5	SANDBAGGEDAGAIN 14 M W Easterby 8-12	G Parkin (5)	90
7	(14)	600-	BLOOMING AMAZING 178 J Eyre 8-9	T Williams	89
8	(8)	20-0	FULLOPEP 14 Mrs M Reveley 8-6	K Darley	87
9	(9)	40-0	MUNGO PARK 14 Mrs J Ramsden 8-5	J Fortune	92
10	(2)	1352	*MUTAHADETH 7 (D,G) D Shaw 8-3*	J Fanning	95
11	(6)	06-0	RUM LAD 14 J Quinn 8-2	J Quinn	82
12	(3)	6240	JACK THE LAD 7 J Hetherton 8-0	N Kennedy	97
13	(11)	630-	HIGH SPIRITS 318 T Easterby 8-0	L Charnock	90
14	[illegible]	[illegible]	MOVE THE CLOUDS 11 D Nicholls 7-10	Iona Wands (7)	[illegible]

[illegible]

HEREFORD

THUNDERER

1.35 Pridewood Fuggle. 2.10 Royal Saxon. 2.40 Almapa. 3.10 Dalametre. 4.25 Dontdressfordinner. 4.55 Another Venture. 5.25 Copper Coil.

Carl Evans: 3.10 Tom's Apache.

GOING: GOOD TO FIRM — SIS

1.35 KILPECK MAIDEN HURDLE

(£2,332: 2m 1f) (4 runners)

1	0-6	NAUTICAL JEWEL 92F K Wingrove 5-11-5	J Power (7)
2	30	PRIDEWOOD FUGGLE 227 R Price 7-11-5	W McFarland
3	*P*	*WOLDSMAN 47 N Twiston-Davies 7-11-5*	*Mr J Goldstein (7)*
4	00	BOLD TIME MONKEY 17 M Tate 6-11-0	W Marston

4-7 Pridewood Fuggle, 11-4 Woldsman, 5-1 Bold Time Monkey, 10-1 Nautical Jewel

2.10 CUSOP HANDICAP CHASE

(£3,186: 3m 1f 110yd) (3)

1	-3UR	FIFTH AMENDMENT 26 (B,D,F,G,S) C Mann 12-11-10	J Magee (3)
2	*3413*	*ROYAL SAXON 7 (B,F,G,S) P Bowen 11-11-10*	*W Marston*
3	524P	WIXOE WONDER 24 M Bradstock 7-11-1	G Upton

10-11 Wixoe Wonder, 5-4 Royal Saxon, 10-1 Fifth Amendment.

2.40 BREDWARDINE NOVICES SELLING HURDLE

(£2,010: 2m 1f) (11)

1	2633	ALMAPA 5 (D,F) R Hodges 5-11-6	T Dascombe (3)
2	P	BOOT JACK 21 P Rich 8-11-0	M Griffiths (7)
3	060	GLEN GARNOCK 37 R Juckes 5-11-0	Gary Lyons
4	*FP*	*MAGICAL BLUES 7 Miss A Embiricos 5-11-0*	*K Gaule*
5	53-0	MORE BILLS 212 J Neville 5-11-0	D J Burchell
6	000-	MUMMY'S MOLE 337 G Roe 6-11-0	D Salter (5)
7	00	TATIBAG 38 R Smith 5-11-0	Mr J Goldstein (7)
8	*0*	*NORTHERN DIAMOND 91F Miss M Rowland 4-10-8*	P Henley (3)
9	00P6	RAPID LINER 17 (B) R Baker 4-10-8	V Slattery
10	5060	CONTRACT BRIDGE 16 P Murphy 4-10-3	W McFarland
11		*LADY ECLAT 78F K Wingrove 4-10-3*	*S Ryan (5)*

9-4 Almapa, 7-2 More Bills, 5-1 *Magical Blues,* 6-1 Glen Garnock, 7-1 Contract Bridge, 12-1 Rapid Liner, 16-1 others.

3.10 GARWAY NOVICES HUNTERS CHASE

(Amateurs: £1,095: 2m) (12)

1	PP22	ANN'S AMBITION 14P Mrs C Hussey 10-12-0	C Heard (7)
2	0P-5	CHAN THE MAN 157 D Burchell 6-12-0	M Harris (7)
3	/214	DALAMETRE 30P (G,S) M Evans 10-12-0	M Munrowd (7)
4	*4-P0*	*HAPPY PADDY 32 (F) B Summers 14-12-0*	*M Cowley (7)*
5	F0/4/	NECTANEBO 706P N Parker 9-12-0	M Frith (7)
6	PPP-	RUN WITH JOY 385P A Hobbs 6-12-0	G Shenkin (7)
7	P/PP	THE COMMUNICATOR 17 (B,S) M Hill 11-12-0	B Pollock (5)
8	/P-P	TOM'S APACHE 24 D Carter 8-12-0	E James (7)
9	P6P	FELTHAM MISTRESS 18 D C Tucker 7-11-9	E Babington (7)
10	PP-U	MICHELLES CRYSTAL 32 F Matthews 6-11-9	J Goldstein (7)
11	33PP	OATS FOR NOTES 7P Mrs R Knape 7-11-9	R Burton (7)
12	*P-P0*	*SPACE MOLLY 14P (B) Mrs N Lay 8-11-9*	*P Cowley (7)*

7-4 Dalametre, 5-2 Ann's Ambition, 8-1 Chan The Man, 10-1 The Communicator, 12-1 Michelles Crystal, Happy Paddy, 14-1 others.

4.25 RACING CHANNEL HANDICAP HURDLE

(£2,794: 2m 1f) (8)

1	0441	EURO SINGER 7 (F) T Keddy 5-11-10	S Ryan (5)
2	33-P	NOBLE SOCIETY 260 (F) K Wingrove 9-11-4	J Power (7)
3	6204	DONTDRESSFORDINNER 16 (D,F,G) R Hodges 7-11-1	T Dascombe (3)
4	-013	VA UTU 7 (CD,F,G) D Lloyd 9-10-11	Sophie Mitchell (3)
5	0300	JEWEL THIEF 120 (V,F) G Balding 7-10-9	Mr E Babington (7)
6	241P	DISSOLVE 7 (D,F,G) N Lampard 5-10-6	Ms L Baker (7)
7	0430	COURAGEOUS KNIGHT 7 (CD,F) P Hayward 8-10-4	W Marston
8	0-30	TAP SHOES 108 R Baker 7-10-0	V Slattery

7-4 Euro Singer, 7-2 Va Utu, 5-1 Dontdressfordinner, 7-1 Dissolve, 8-1 Tap Shoes, Courageous Knight, 12-1 others

4.55 PANDY NOVICES CHASE (£2,918: 2m 3f) (6)

1	122P	DUKE OF DREAMS 173 (F) R Baker 7-11-6	V Slattery
2	-64P	ANOTHER VENTURE 81 (S) F Murphy 7-11-0	M Foster
3	/02-	DIAMOND LIGHT 329P V Bishop 10-11-0	Mr S Lloyd
4	PP-P	FREELINE LUSTRE 151 P Murphy 7-11-0	W McFarland
5	0P50	PANDORA'S PRIZE 5 (S) T Wall 11-10-9	T Eley
6		SOMETHING CATCHY A Barrow 7-10-9	W Marston

9-4 Duke Of Dreams, 3-1 Another Venture, 7-2 Something Catchy, 5-1 Diamond Light, 6-1 Pandora's Prize, 16-1 Freeline Lustre.

5.25 BROAD OAK CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS NOVICES HANDICAP HURDLE (£2,248: 3m 2f) (7)

1	1533	COPPER COIL 12 (S) W G M Turner 7-11-13	J Power (3)
2	3-53	KINGSWOOD MANOR 7 Miss V Williams 5-11-4	P Henley
3	2000	CLONGOUR 77 (B) F Murphy 7-11-1	D J Kavanagh
4	0060	MUSIC CLASS 14 C Brooks 6-10-12	M Berry (3)
5	005	*HI MARBLE 22 Mrs M Jones 6-10-5*	M Lane (5)
6	P006	LADY OF MINE 21 P Bowen 7-10-0	L Cummins (3)
7	PP00	NUNS LUCY 24 F Jordan 6-10-0	Guy Lewis

9-4 Copper Coil, 5-2 Kingswood Manor, 6-1 Clongour, 7-1 Hi Marble, 8-1 Music Class, Lady Of Mine, 10-1 Nuns Lucy

COURSE SPECIALISTS

HEREFORD: Trainers: Miss V Williams, 4 winners from 7 runners, 57.1%; F Murphy, 4 from 8, 50.0%; C Mann, 3 from 6, 50.0%; N Twiston-Davies, 30 from 96, 31.3%; C Brooks, 4 from 15, 26.7%; G Balding, 5 from 31, 16.1%. Jockeys: Mr E James, 3 winners from 8 rides, 37.5%; M Foster, 4 from 16, 25.0%; D J Burchell, 6 from 45, 13.3%; T Dascombe, 5 from 45, 11.1%; G Upton, 4 from 36, 11.1%; D Gallagher, 4 from 37, 10.8%.

BEVERLEY: Trainers: R Hannon, 5 winners from 15 runners, 33.3%; J Gosden, 4 from 14, 28.6%; P Harris, 7 from 28, 25.0%; J Pearce, 4 from 21, 19.0%; M Johnston, 21 from 111, 18.9%; M Channon, 7 from 39, 17.9%. Jockeys: Pat Eddery, 5 winners from 16 rides, 31.3%; K Darley, 54 from 276, [illegible]; R Cochrane, 11 from 52, 21.2%; [illegible]

RACING NEXT WEEK

MONDAY: Southwell (AW, first race 2.15), Kelso (2.00)

TUESDAY: Nottingham (2.00), Wolverhampton (AW, 2.15)

WEDNESDAY: Ripon (2.10), Chepstow (2.00), Ludlow (2.20).

THURSDAY: Folkestone (2.00), Hamilton (2.20), *Fontwell (2.10).*

FRIDAY: Beverley (2.20), Brighton (2.00), Nottingham (2.10)

SATURDAY: Warwick (1.50), Wolverhampton (AW, 7.00), Ascot (BBC, 2.00), Newton Abbot (2.10), Sedgefield (1.45).

Flat meetings in bold

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A FREE AFTERNOON AT NEWMARKET RACES

GRAND NATIONAL RUNNERS, RIDERS, COLOURS AND ODDS

TEXT BY GEORGE RAE AND JAMES WILLOUGHBY

3.45 MARTELL GRAND NATIONAL CHASE

BBC1

(Handicap: grade III: £178,146: 4m 4f) (40 runners)

1	10/P32-P	**MASTER OATS 48 (BF,G,S)** (P Matthews) K Bailey 11-11-10	N Williamson	80
2	21-6P2P	**NAHTHEN LAD 23 (G,S)** (Mrs P Hemmings) Mrs J Pitman 8-10-9	J F Titley	80
3	214-335	**LO STREGONE 42 (BF,F,G,S)** (Mrs S Clegg) T Tate 11-10-4	G Bradley	81
4	F/1S1-51	**SUNY BAY 42 (G,S)** (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 8-10-3	J Osborne	99
5	15-2605	**FEATHERED GALE 34 (F,G,S)** (M O'Connor) A L T Moore (Ire) 10-10-3	F Woods	81
6	2125-3U	**AVRO ANSON 63 (F,G)** (The Mirror Punters Club) M Camacho 9-10-2	P Niven	90
7	1F5/1P2	**BELMONT KING 28 (S)** (Mrs B Bond) P Nicholls 9-10-1	R Johnson	84
8	52/10-P0	**BUCKBOARD BOUNCE 7 (F,G,S)** (R Ogden) G Richards 11-10-1	P Carberry	80
9	01-241P	**BISHOPS HALL 28 (F,G,S)** (T Carroll) R Alner 11-10-1	D Bridgwater	80
10	231112	**LORD GYLLENE 21 (BF,G,S)** (S Clarke) S Brookshaw 9-10-0	A Dobbin	87
11	11U-021	**WYLDE HIDE 34 (G,S)** (J McManus) A L T Moore (Ire) 10-10-0	C F Swan	93
12	5P114P	**DEXTRA DOVE 42 (F,G,S)** (Dextra Lighting Systems) S Earle 10-10-0	C Maude	82
13	30-1551	**ANTONIN 48 (F,G,S)** (G Bailey Ltd) Mrs S Bramall (Ire) 9-10-0	C O'Dwyer	94
14	11F12-P	**SMITH'S BAND 35 (G,S)** (A Smith) Mrs J Pitman 9-10-0	R Dunwoody	85
15	F11300	**NEW CO 24 (G,S)** (Exors of Mrs L Ronan) M Morris (Ire) 9-10-0	D J Casey	80
16	4121F4	**GO BALLISTIC 23 (F,G,S)** (Mrs B Lockhart) J O'Shea 8-10-0	M A Fitzgerald	97
17	11F2-14	**GENERAL WOLFE 28 (BF,G,S)** (Winning Line Racing) T Forster 8-10-0	L Wyer	84
18	4-12232	**GLEMOT 113 (BF,F,G,S)** (D Yardy) K Bailey 9-10-0	S McNeill	73
19	11-2553	**VALIANT WARRIOR 14 (F,G,S)** (P Sellars) M Hammond 9-10-0	R Garritty	68
20	5P5344	**KILLESHIN 21 (C,G,S)** (H Manners) H Manners 11-10-0	S Curran	75
21	50U-PP4	**MASTER BOSTON 2 (G,S)** (M Oldham) R Woodhouse 9-10-0	NON RUNNER	–
22	21-225U	**STRAIGHT TALK 133 (F,G,S)** (Mrs C Paterson) P Nicholls 10-10-0	Mr J Tizzard	72
23	P0F01P	**NUAFFE 38 (B,G,S)** (J Doyle) P Fahy (Ire) 12-10-0	T Mitchell	61
24	011-320	**NORTHERN HIDE 24 (F,G,S)** (Northern Hide Ptnrs) M Salaman 11-10-0	P Holley	74
25	P3-1441	**TURNING TRIX 35 (G,S)** (M Davies) D Nicholson 10-10-0	J R Kavanagh	79
26	12223F	**RIVER MANDATE 25 (V,G,S)** (Anne Duchess of Westminster) T Forster 10-10-0.	A Thornton	75
27	45U5P0	**GRANGE BRAKE 25 (C,F,G,S)** (H Mould) N Twiston-Davies 11-10-0	D Walsh	76
28	321142	**EVANGELICA 79 (BF,F,S)** (M Pipe Racing Club) M Pipe 7-10-0	R Supple	68
29	554004	**BACK BAR 20 (G,S)** (P McCarthy) A L T Moore (Ire) 9-10-0	T P Treacy	66
30	4U0/240	**DAKYNS BOY 49 (G,S)** (A Parker) N Twiston-Davies 12-10-0	T J Murphy	70
31	554-05F	**SCRIBBLER 21 (G,S)** (M Farnan) G McCourt 11-10-0	D Fortt	59
32	442/2-P4	**CELTIC ABBEY 23 (F,G,S)** (G Powell) Miss V Williams 9-10-0	B Powell	60
33	11-3F33	**FULL OF OATS 35 (BF,G,S)** (I MacDonald) Miss H Knight 11-10-0	J Culloty	67
34	0/5P-246	**CAMELOT KNIGHT 25 (S)** (M Gates) N Twiston-Davies 11-10-0	C Llewellyn	68
35	3P2-045	**MUGONI BEACH 43 (B,BF,F,G,S)** (J Ennis) M Pipe 12-10-0	J Evans	66
36	U223-36	**PLASTIC SPACEAGE 49 (G,S)** (G Dalziel) J Old 14-10-0	G Upton	66
37	1340-60	**OVER THE STREAM 19 (F,G)** (J Gordon & E Gordon) Miss M Milligan 11-10-0	A S Smith	59
38	35P/1FP-	**DON'T LIGHT UP 347 (B,G,S)** (I Naylor) Miss V Williams 11-10-0	Mr R Thornton	58
39	32-10P6	**PINK GIN 36 (F,G,S)** (Mrs M Francis) M Hammond 10-10-0	Mr C Bonner	58
40	533B33	**SPUFFINGTON 28 (G,S)** (J Clopet) J Gifford 9-10-0	P Hide	58

Long handicap: Lord Gyllene 9-13, Wylde Hide 9-13, Dextra Dove 9-13, Antonin 9-13, Smith's Band 9-10, New Co 9-9, Go Ballistic 9-8, General Wolfe 9-8, Glemot 9-7, Valiant Warrior 9-6, Killeshin 9-3, Master Boston 9-3, Straight Talk 9-2, Nuaffe 9-2, Northern Hide 9-0, Turning Trix 8-12, River Mandate 8-12, Grange Brake 8-12, Evangelica 8-10, Back Bar 8-10, Dakyns Boy 8-9, Scribbler 8-8, Celtic Abbey 8-7, Full Of Oats 8-6, Camelot Knight 8-6, Mugoni Beach 8-4, Plastic Spaceage 8-2, Over The Stream 8-2, Don't Light Up 8-2, Pink Gin 8-0, Spuffington 8-0.

1996: ROUGH QUEST 10-10-7 M A Fitzgerald (7-1 fav) T Casey 27 ran

BETTING: Coral: 9-1 Suny Bay, Lord Gyllene, Wylde Hide, 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Smith's Band, 14-1 Feathered Gale, Lo Stregone, 18-1 Antonin, Nahthen Lad, 20-1 General Wolfe, 22-1 Belmont King, 25-1 Buckboard Bounce, 28-1 Turning Trix, 33-1 Dextra Dove, Killeshin, Master Oats, 40-1 New Co, Northern Hide, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Evangelica, Glemot, River Mandate, Straight Talk, Valiant Warrior, 66-1 Celtic Abbey, Nuaffe, 100-1 others.

Ladbroke: 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Suny Bay, Wylde Hide, 11-1 Lo Stregone, 12-1 Smith's Band, 14-1 Antonin, General Wolfe, 16-1 Nahthen Lad, 20-1 Feathered Gale, Turning Trix, 25-1 Master Oats, 28-1 Belmont King, Killeshin, 33-1 Buckboard Bounce, 40-1 Dextra Dove, Evangelica, New Co, Northern Hide, River Mandate, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Grange Brake, 66-1 Full Of Oats, Celtic Abbey, Glemot, Valiant Warrior, Straight Talk, 100-1 Nuaffe, Back Bar, Mugoni Beach, Pink Gin, 150-1 Scribbler, Dakyns Boy, Spuffington, Camelot Knight, 200-1 Don't Light Up, Over The Stream, Plastic Spaceage.

Tote: 8-1 Suny Bay, 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Wylde Hide, 14-1 Lo Stregone, Nahthen Lad, Smith's Band, 16-1 Antonin, General Wolfe, 20-1 Belmont King, Buckboard Bounce, Feathered Gale, 25-1 Master Oats, 33-1 Dextra Dove, 40-1 Bishops Hall, Killeshin, New Co, Turning Trix, 50-1 others.

William Hill: 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Suny Bay, Wylde Hide, 12-1 Lo Stregone, Smith's Band, 14-1 General Wolfe, 16-1 Antonin, Nahthen Lad, 25-1 Belmont King, Buckboard Bounce, Feathered Gale, Killeshin, Master Oats, 33-1 Dextra Dove, Turning Trix, 40-1 Evangelica, New Co, River Mandate, Valiant Warrior, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Glemot, Northern Hide, 66-1 Back Bar, Full Of Oats, Grange Brake, Mugoni Beach, Straight Talk, 100-1 others.

13 **ANTONIN**

Jockey: Conor O'Dwyer

Trained in Ireland by an Englishwoman, Sue Bramall. Returned to best with impressive victory in Punchestown National Trial in February but may be better suited by softer ground than he will encounter today. Eighth last year.

Betting: 20-1

6 **AVRO ANSON**

Jockey: Peter Niven

Former high-class hurdler showing an aptitude for fences, despite the blemish of unseating his rider last time. No doubting his quality and could well improve further, especially on his favoured good ground. Big chance.

Betting: 10-1

29 **BACK BAR**

Jockey: Tommy Treacy

Three times a winner last season but out of sorts this term. Latest effort, a distant last of four in a hurdle, does nothing to inspire confidence in a return to form. Weakest of the Irish challenge, back only at your peril.

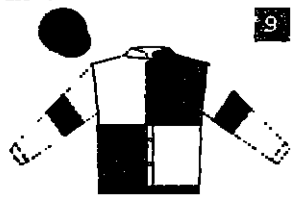
Betting: 66-1

7 **BELMONT KING**

Jockey: Richard Johnson

King for a day? Not implausible though this thorough stayer may need the rain to reign. Good efforts in handicaps this term suggest he will have few problems lasting out the trip but the drying ground could be against him.

Betting: 20-1

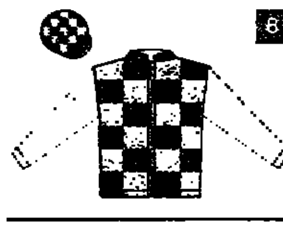


9 **BISHOPS HALL**

Jockey: David Bridgwater

Has failed to progress beyond the first fence in last two Nationals. Capable at his best but will need to explode the horses for courses theory in some style if he is to play a major role today. Bridgwater finished second last year.

Betting: 50-1

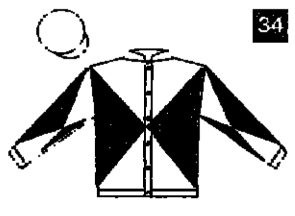


8 **BUCKBOARD BOUNCE**

Jockey: Paul Carberry

Carberry has faced a race against time to prove his fitness to ride in bid to emulate father Tommy, who won on L'Escargot in 1975. Comes to Aintree with the unusual preparation of having finished eighth over hurdles at Carlisle.

Betting: 25-1



34 **CAMELOT KNIGHT**

Jockey: Carl Llewellyn

The National would need to be a real lottery for this Camelot to show a profit. Mostly out of form this season and faces near impossible task from well out of the handicap. Number 34 most unlikely to be lucky for you.

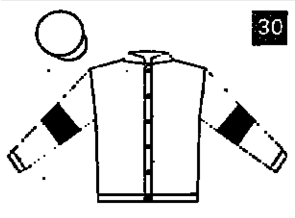
Betting: 100-1

32 **CELTIC ABBEY**

Jockey: Brendan Powell

Those tempted by the Abbey habit should invest their stake elsewhere. This hunter chaser finished a fine fourth in the Foxhunters Chase at the Cheltenham Festival and should stay the trip but is well out of his depth in this company.

Betting: 66-1



30 **DAKYNS BOY**

Jockey: Timmy Murphy

Formerly smart dyed-in-the-wool stayer, at his best when the mud is flying. Would need the heavens to open to rekindle the spark of his younger days. Jockey is a rising star but faces a mountainous task to take a hand on this mount.

Betting: 66-1

12 **DEXTRA DOVE**

Jockey: Chris Maude

Nicolaus Silver in 1961 was the last grey to triumph in the National. This bold-jumping front-runner could make a determined bid to put the record straight if he adapts to the course. First National runner for trainer Simon Earle.

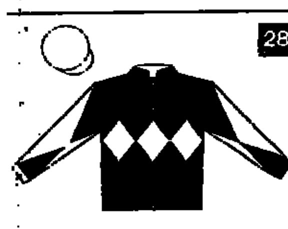
Betting: 33-1

38 **DON'T LIGHT UP**

Jockey: Robert Thornton

Unlikely source to smoke out the winner. Without a run this year, and despite having won on his reappearance last season, faces a monumental task first time out in this company. Only confirmed optimists need apply.

Betting: 100-1



28 **EVANGELICA**

Jockey: Robbie Supple

Little about Martin Pipe's achievements surprise but a victory here would be one of his more remarkable feats. Thorough stayer, although form is a long way short of this standard. Outside prospects at best.

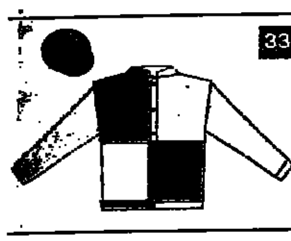
Betting: 66-1

5 **FEATHERED GALE**

Jockey: Francis Woods

Rerouted from the Irish Grand National on Monday, which he won last year, at eleventh hour in attempt to improve trainer's miserable Aintree record his six runners have failed to complete the course. Second string to Wylde Hide.

Betting: 25-1

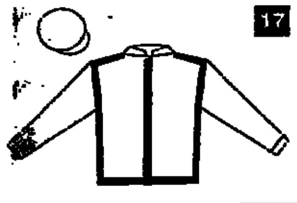


33 **FULL OF OATS**

Jockey: Jim Culloty

Unlikely to have enough pace to yield rich harvest, though a dependable jumper and thorough stayer in his own grade. Should plod on honestly but faces a stiff task at the weights. Other outsiders make more appeal.

Betting: 66-1



17 **GENERAL WOLFE**

Jockey: Lorcan Wyer

Attempts to scale Aintree heights for trainer Tim Forster's fourth National winner. Disputed big-race favouritism before poor run last time undermined case, but second in Scottish National last year proves stamina. Lively each-way hope.

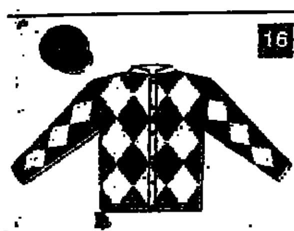
Betting: 20-1

18 **GLEMOT**

Jockey: Simon McNeill

Tackling the big fences in a good cause as owner Dennis Yardy will donate a quarter of any prize-money won to Sheffield Children's Hospital. Plenty to do here, though, and the generous gesture is likely to go unrewarded.

Betting: 66-1



16 **GO BALLISTIC**

Jockey: Mick Fitzgerald

Similar to last year's winner, Rough Quest, in that fine run in Cheltenham Gold Cup makes him well weighted. Clear chance, but less experienced than Rough Quest and confidence reduced by tendency to make jumping mistakes.

Betting: 12-1

27 **GRANGE BRAKE**

Jockey: David Walsh

Unreliable customer with more poor efforts than good in his recent record. Capable of useful performances on his day though, and if the challenge of the National sparks his interest could go well at a big price.

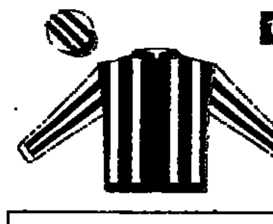
Betting: 66-1

20 **KILLESHIN**

Jockey: Sean Curran

In excellent form last year but has struggled to recapture his sparkle this term. No doubts about his stamina, ground poses a far bigger problem. Well suited by soft ground, which he is unlikely to encounter here.

Betting: 33-1



10 **LORD GYLLENE**

Jockey: Tony Dobbin

Sure-footed in three front-running victories this season but found out in better class last time. Well handicapped and stays well, question mark is that ground may be quicker than ideal for him. Chance all the same.

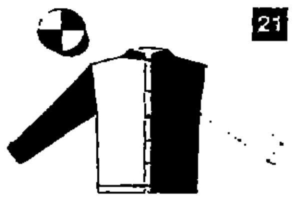
Betting: 10-1

3 **LO STREGONE**

Jockey: Graham Bradley

Lampooned by his critics as "Slow Stregone", a reference to his abundance of stamina over speed. Has a bit of quality, though, and, if his dismal display at Haydock last time can be forgiven, not without a chance. The ground will suit.

Betting: 14-1



21 **MASTER BOSTON**

Jockey:

Non Runner

Unseated his rider at the second fence in the [illegible] Hughes Trophy over the National fences on Thursday. Well beaten on his latest completed start and very much a rank outsider.

Betting: 100-1

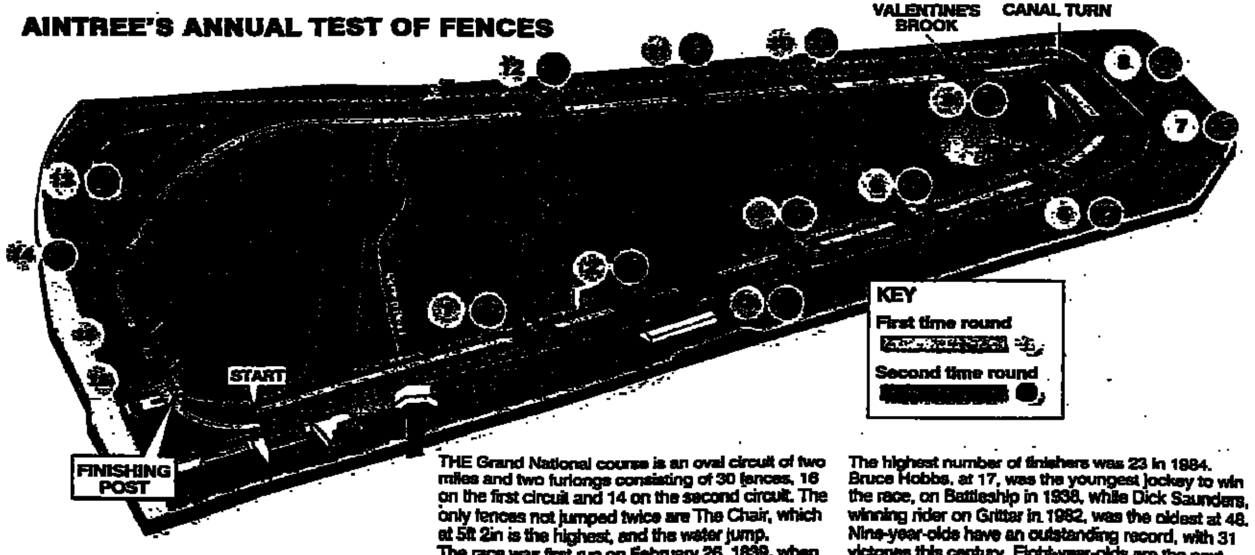
1 **MASTER OATS**

Jockey: Norman Williamson

Class act at his best. Seventh under 11st 10lb two years ago when attempting to complete a Cheltenham Gold Cup-Grand National double. Only four runs since, without a win, and has a stiff task on ground faster than ideal.

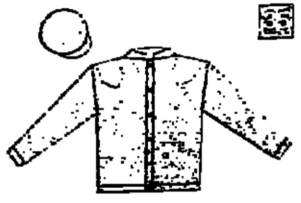
Betting: 33-1

AINTREE'S ANNUAL TEST OF FENCES



THE Grand National course is an oval circuit of two miles and two furlongs consisting of 30 fences, 16 on the first circuit and 14 on the second circuit. The only fences not jumped twice are The Chair, which at 5ft 2in is the highest, and the water jump. The race was first run on February 26, 1839, when the winner was the aptly-named Lottery. His winning time was 14min 53sec, whereas Mr Frisk, the 1990 winner, triumphed in a record 8min 47.8sec.

The highest number of finishers was 23 in 1984. Bruce Hobbs, at 17, was the youngest jockey to win the race, on Battleship in 1938, while Dick Saunders, winning rider on Grittar in 1982, was the oldest at 48. Nine-year-olds have an outstanding record, with 31 victories this century. Eight-year-olds are the next most successful age bracket, with 14 winners. Red Rum, successful in 1973, 1974 and 1977 is the only horse to have won three Grand Nationals.

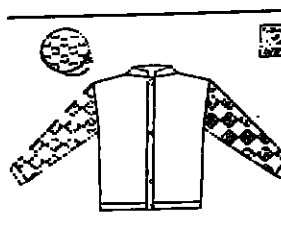


35 **MUGONI BEACH**

Jockey: Jamie Evans

Evans aims to become first Australian jockey to win National since William Watkinson scored on Jack Horner in 1926. Likely to find himself beached on this Pipe-trained outsider who faces a severe test of his jumping.

Betting: 66-1



2 **NAHTHEN LAD**

Jockey: Jason Titley

Reunites 1995 Grand National-winning trainer-and-jockey team of Jenny Pitman and Titley. Last season's high-class form approached only once in four runs this term. Chance on best efforts, but may be better on softer ground.

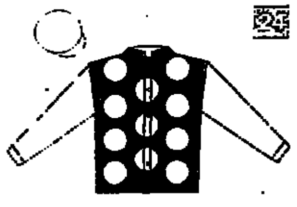
Betting: 16-1

15 **NEW CO**

Jockey: David Casey

Dogged by jumping mistakes this season, although has still managed to win twice. Regular rider Conor O'Dwyer's decision to partner Antonin is hardly a vote of confidence. Casey makes his first National appearance.

Betting: 40-1



24 **NORTHERN HIDE**

Jockey: Paul Holley

Taffy Salaman, who trained Churchtown Boy to finish second to Red Rum as long ago as 1977, returns to the National 17 years after his last attempt. However, holds only a slim chance of putting the record straight.

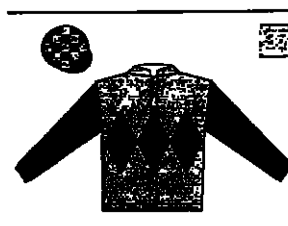
Betting: 40-1

23 **NUAFFE**

Jockey: Terry Mitchell

Jumping errors, including a fall in the National two years ago, are all too easily found in his record. Only one win over the last two seasons and, with the ground riding faster than is ideal for him, has only modest prospects.

Betting: 66-1



37 **OVER THE STREAM**

Jockey: Adie Smith

Thirteenth in last years National when trained by Kim Bailey and has since joined Kate Milligan. Another completion looks the limit of his ambitions but gives Smith, eight years a jockey, his first ride in the big race. Over and out.

Betting: 100-1

39 **PINK GIN**

Jockey: Chris Bonner

Shares, with Spuffington, the dubious distinction of being officially the worst horse in the race. Stays forever, and Bonner has a fine record over the big fences. But no reason to think his backers will be feeling in the pink.

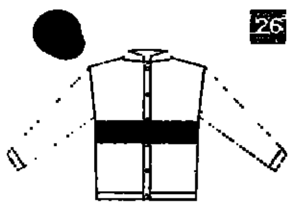
Betting: 100-1

36 **PLASTIC SPACEAGE**

Jockey: Guy Upton

Oldest horse in the field. Could hardly be faced with a more demanding task, being asked to end a long losing run from an unfavourable position in the handicap.

Betting: 100-1

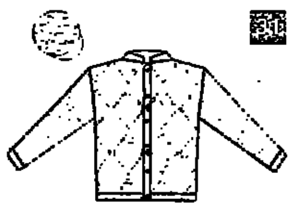


26 **RIVER MANDATE**

Jockey: Andrew Thornton

Demanding ride will have Thornton working hard long before the finish. Consistent in lesser company but must improve to win. Wears colours made famous by the magnificent Arkle and carried to National success by Last Suspect.

Betting: 50-1

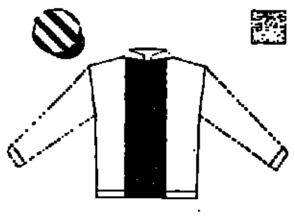


31 **SCRIBBLER**

Jockey: Dan Fortt

Without a win since November 1994 and this is some place to try to end that sequence. Chance not helped by a fall last time in the Midlands National at Uttoxeter. Not one to scribble on a betting slip today.

Betting: 100-1



14 **SMITH'S BAND**

Jockey: Richard Dunwoody

Unites impeccable National records of Jenny Pitman and Dunwoody (two wins apiece). Progressive and should not be condemned on reappearance run. Chance, but confidence lessened by reservations about stamina.

Betting: 20-1

40 **SPUFFINGTON**

Jockey: Philip Hide

Trainer Josh Gifford secured his place in National lore with the fairytale victory of Aldaniti in 1981. Little hope of an encore today as, according to the official handicapper at least, there is no worse horse in the race.

Betting: 100-1

22 **STRAIGHT TALK**

Jockey: Joe Tizzard

Notable primarily for carrying the hopes of 17-year-old amateur rider Tizzard. Not particularly well handicapped and dislodged no less a jockey than the champion, Tony McCoy, over the National fences last time out.

Betting: 50-1

4 **SUNY BAY**

Jockey: Jamie Osborne

Seeks £100,000 bonus for connections after winning Greenalls Grand National Trial Chase at Haydock in February. Well handicapped, classy and, despite some reservations about the ground, has a fine chance.

Betting: 8-1

25 **TURNING TRIX**

Jockey: John Kavanagh

Aimed at the National since winning at Newbury last month. His trainer, David Nicholson, is in sparkling form and this could turn out to be a case for Kavanagh QC, quietly confident of a good performance.

Betting: 40-1

19 **VALIANT WARRIOR**

Jockey: Russ Garritty

Consistent enough but does most of his racing at around 2½ miles, so faces a bit of a shock with another two miles to cover here. Garritty has enjoyed a fine season but will need all his magic to bring this one home in front.

Betting: 40-1

11 **WYLDE HIDE**

Jockey: Charlie Swan

Best of the Irish. Not out of it when unseating rider six fences from home last year. Live hope, but ground perhaps faster than ideal.

Betting: 9-1

VERDICT: 1, SUNY BAY; 2, Avro Anson; 3, General Wolfe; 4, Turning Trix

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Keeping in step with Smith's Band

RICHARD DUNWOODY

On minimising the risks at Aintree

One good thing about travelling the country by car is that you have a rare opportunity to think. Normally it is three hours from my home to Aintree but, like so many others heading to Liverpool on Thursday, I got caught up in the motorway closures. There was serious gridlock and, needless to say, plenty of time to consider the big race.

It's probably as well I am not superstitious. I found myself wondering whether the chaos was indicative of what we could expect on Grand National day. No racing event has greater potential for chaos than 40 horses charging around Aintree.

There's little point in thinking too hard about how the race might unfold. I learnt that lesson as I approached the first fence on my first ride in 1985. I'd spent hours going through the runners, making a note of the bad jumpers and resolving not to follow any of them into a fence. Sure enough, as I headed for the first on West Tip, I found myself on the heels of Solihull Sport, a 100-1 no-hoper. He rushed ahead of me with his head in the air and he jumped right across my path. I was very fortunate not to end up on the floor - although I managed to achieve that, without outside assistance, at Becher's second time round.

Full form guide for the Grand National ... 41

Obviously you have to be more aware than usual of the loose horses and what they might do. Otherwise, I try to ride the race the same as any other. It's a big occasion, the world is watching and riding in the National is always a huge thrill. But jockeys must keep their minds on the job. As at Cheltenham, it is too easy to lose concentration. It's about minimising the risks; not letting the distractions affect your performance.

It's funny how the Grand National produces anomalies among the statistics. Some fine jockeys have a terrible record but the race has been kind to me. I've been in the money seven times and the victories of West Tip and Münnehoma are special memories. This time I ride Smith's Band for Jenny Pitman, whose horse, Superior Finish, I rode into third place last year. There is no finer trainer than Jenny when it comes to the National.

If you look at Smith's Band's form this season you couldn't really entertain him. Ideally, he would have had another run but Jenny is very happy with him. She knows what it takes and I am encouraged to hear her speak so well of the horse. Smith's Band stays and jumps well and had some solid form last season. I've never sat on him before — the ground has been too firm for me to school him in the build-up. However, I've seen plenty of him and I'm anticipating a good experience.

My approach to riding the race is to come down the middle of the track. Jenny likes her horses to race down the inside, so that aspect needs to be settled in the paddock beforehand. Otherwise, I'll be anxious to let Smith's Band find his rhythm, which I believe is fundamental to his chance. It's a great feeling to ride a horse that responds to the unique challenge of Aintree and is comfortable with the pace of the race.

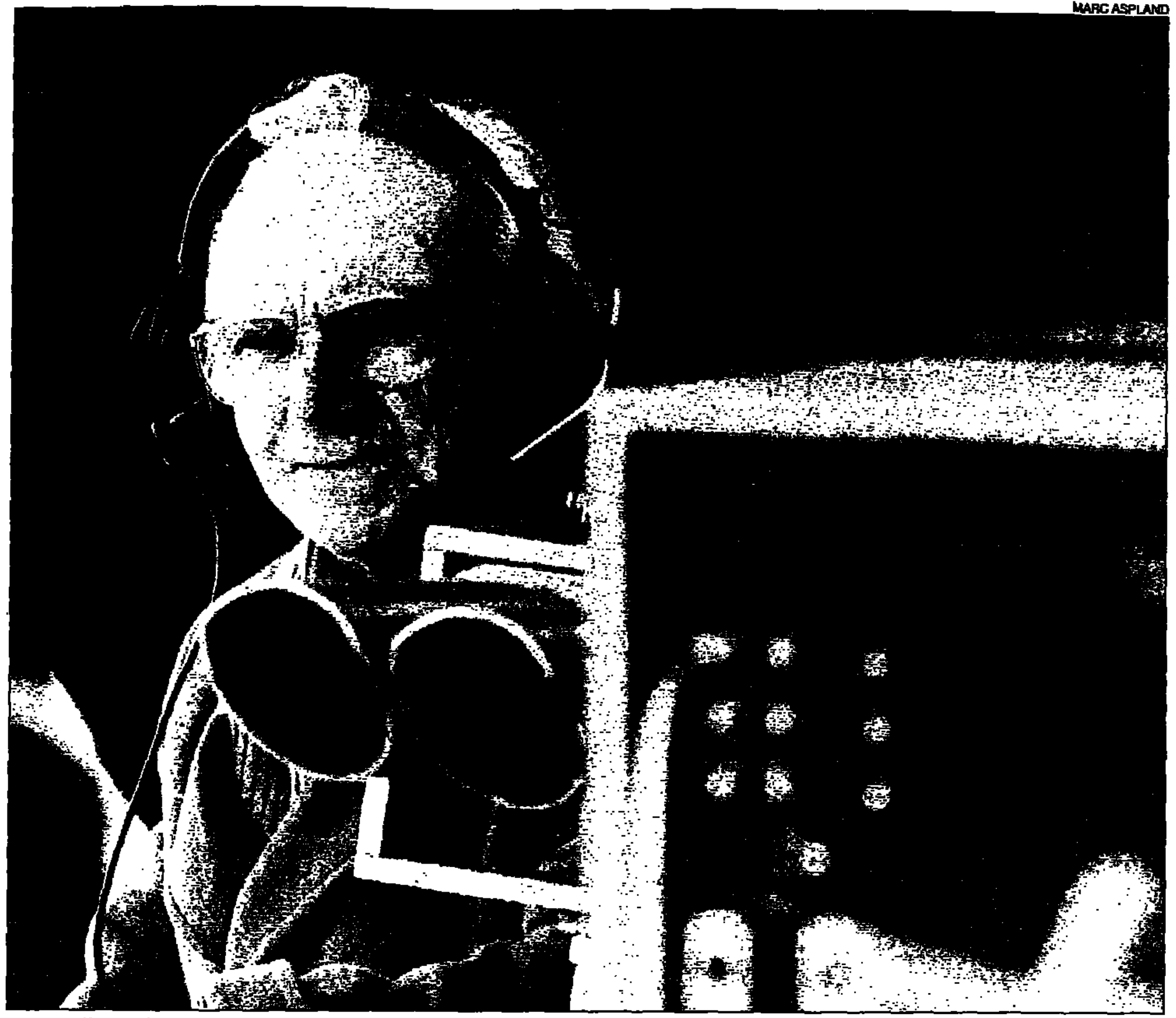
On the first circuit I won't be too concerned about my position. I'll be looking after Smith's Band as best I can. Only after jumping the water, in front of the stands, will I assess the situation. I'll be checking on the progress of the fancied horses and thinking about taking up a position. This is where the real race starts. The first circuit is strictly about survival.

I'll be keeping a close eye on Antonin and Wylde Hide, two horses I think have great chances. I was very impressed with Antonin at Punchestown last time. Wylde Hide ran well before unseating his jockey last year and he has always struck me as a National type. Of the others, Go Ballistic's fourth in the Gold Cup was his best run yet, but he has fallen three times in the last two seasons. Suny Bay might just lead us all a merry dance. He stays well but the doubt about him is that he has broken blood vessels in the past. That could recur at any time.

Those with an eye for detail will notice I'm putting up 3lb overweight on Smith's Band at 10st 3lb. I did the same on Superior Finish last year — I don't want to go out there feeling too rough from a diet of wasting and saunas. Riding in the National is physically exhausting and all jockeys are thrilled just to complete the course. We tell each other we cannot ask for more than that, but we'll all be dreaming just the same.

Everyone who leaves the weighing room at around 3.30 this afternoon will be desperately hoping to return after an interview with Desmond Lynam.

MARC ASPLAND



O'Sullevan, in familiar commentary box pose with binoculars at the ready, covers his fiftieth and last Grand National today

O'Sullevan approaches final furlong of long and distinguished career

Richard Evans speaks to the man who has been "the voice of racing" for 50 years

The start half a century ago was hardly auspicious. After one of his earliest BBC commentaries, a decidedly unenthusiastic director of outside broadcasts insisted more practice was required. His mother was even more blunt. "Darling, I saw you on television yesterday and you looked absolutely ghastly. I do hope you are never going to do that again."

The maternal advice was ignored and this afternoon Peter O'Sullevan, 79, will climb the 76 steps to a commentary position high above Aintree racecourse for his 50th — and final — Grand National. For many, who choose the world's most famous steeplechase for their annual flutter, the race will never be quite the same again.

The unmistakeable gravelly tones, the rat-a-tat-tat delivery and the inevitable end of race crescendo have made "The Voice" as much a part of our national heritage as the race itself. And yet, ironically, the personal trademarks imitated by the likes of Mike Yarwood and Rory Bremner were the very reasons O'Sullevan came in for criticism when he first began spieling in the post-War years.

"My voice used to go up and I could not get the damn thing down. It was probably the pressure and the excitement which raised it. Certainly, I was widely criticised for talking too quickly. I have letters from Peter Dimmock when he became head of outside broadcasts saying I must talk slower."

No instant success; no great encouragement and, all those years ago, virtually no facilities to work from, which exposed O'Sullevan's fragile health to the worst of nature's elements. "This is one of the great mysteries; how I have survived physically for this long because it is not as though I set off with any great advantage in that respect. I had a very moderate chest, a tendency to bronchitis and flu, so it is amazing.

"I went regularly from Lincoln to Liverpool with the flu. Three days at the Carholme and you cannot imagine how bleak and cold it was. The most Arctic day on the Rowley mile at Newmarket was like the Cote d'Azur by comparison. It was unbelievable; it would cut right through you. So it was a most unlikely career. What compounds the improbability is the duration." Indeed, at the start of this decade, the idea of completing 50 Grand Nationals seemed the longest of long shots.

A few long-priced equine outsiders have been called home — and tipped or backed — during his half century and for O'Sullevan, the Grand National is the race which touches the nerve of the nation. "It is without question the tops. The Derby is exhilarating and exciting for different reasons, but the National is elevated to this emotional level by one's admiration for both horses and riders; the challenge that they face and for the sheer athletic achievement of the winning combination."

The victory of Merryman II in 1960 holds special memories. He suggested to Miss Winnifred Wallace, owner of the hunter chaser, that Neville Crump would be the ideal trainer. O'Sullevan had an ante-post tickle months before the race — £1,000-£28 to win and £50-£10 to complete the first circuit — and then called him home in what was the first televised National.

"The equipment we had was diabolical. The monitor was dreadful and there were all the ingredients for disaster. The producer was screaming and there were plenty of panic stations. At the end I felt rung out like a rag but apparently the broadcast had gone well and Merryman won. Everything had come right."

The National without O'Sullevan will seem like Morecambe without Wise; strawberries without cream. And yet it could have been all very different. If he could have foreseen the "appalling" way the BBC stopped covering the Derby and lost other prestige meetings, he might have taken a generous financial offer to join ITV years ago. Even now, he sympathises with recent criticism of the BBC's rather staid style of presenting day-to-day racing.

Today he has more important matters. The Princess Royal will unveil a bust of O'Sullevan after the first race before joining him in the commentary box. And then there is his last National call. "I am not very relaxed until the race has started but once it is underway I feel I am with them ..." This afternoon hundreds of millions of viewers around the globe will be with him.

Lo Stregone has history on his side in National challenge

BY JACK WATERMAN

IN JUST over the past two decades a sea-change has taken place in the character of the Martell Grand National. The fences, of course, have been modified but still need jumping, as was strikingly proved in the John Hughes Trophy Chase this Thursday when only nine of the 20 starters completed the course. Of more significance, however, is a remarkable shift in the most common age of winners.

Traditionally, this used to be nine: from 1946 up to 1974, 14 of this age group succeeded, plus eight eight-year olds and only six older horses. But from 1975 onwards, the break-down has become: five 12-year olds, six 11-year olds and four ten-year olds, with only four aged nine, and two aged eight.

Handicap

In the same period from 1975, only two winners have run off the minimum weight of ten stone. The other 19 were all in the handicap proper. Today, there are only nine in that category, and, because the participation of Master Oats has given such a lopsided look to the weights, consideration can be extended to fancied runners such as Lord Gyllene, Wylde Hide and Antonin, who are only a pound out of the handicap.

Stamina

Those with ability to see out the extreme distance include Lo Stregone, Lord Gyllene and Suny Bay.

Betting

Outright favourites have a poor record: only two have succeeded in the past 16 runnings, including Rough Quest, who led the betting market at 7-1 last year. Yet other well-backed horses frequently succeed. Favourites apart, in the past quarter-century, 14 winners have been priced between 13-2 and 16-1.

Trained In Ireland

Five horses take part on the 150th anniversary of their first triumph, with Matthew in 1847. L'Escargot in 1975 was the most recent success, however. Notably Wylde Hide and Antonin will be going for a change of luck this afternoon.

Jockeys

Richard Dunwoody has the best record with two victories, and four other times in the first four. Other winning riders are Jason Titley, Mick Fitzgerald and Carl Llewellyn.

Trainers

Jenny Pitman richly deserves her title of "Queen of Aintree": two winners and four lesser places. Kim Bailey, Gordon Richards, Tim Forster and Martin Pipe are others with past victories.

Verdict

LO STREGONE is given the vote over **Lord Gyllene**, **Antonin** and **Nahthen Lad**.

YESTERDAY'S RESULTS

Aintree

Going: good

2.00 (2m 4f hdle) 1, **SANMARTINO** (R Dunwoody, 8-11 fav; Private Handicapper's top rating). 2, Courbaril (N Williamson, 10-1) 3, Hurdante (M A Fitzgerald, 20-1) ALSO RAN: 7 Doano's Beeno (5th), 9 Liss De Paor (6th), 11 John Drumm, 12 Far Ahead (4th), Influence Pedler, 20 Easy Listening (pu), 50 Nicola Marie 10 ran NR: Ever Blessed, Marello 1½l, 1½l, sh hd, 2½l, ½l. O Nicholson at Temple Guiting Tote £1 80, £1 30, £1 90 £5 30 DF: £6 10 Trio: £76 80 CSF £9.18.

2.35 (2m 4f ch) 1, **MARTHA'S SON** (C Llewellyn, 5-2), 2, Strong Promise (N Williamson, 9-4 fav) 3, Viking Flagship (R Dunwoody, 11-4) ALSO RAN: 4 Ask Tom (4th) 4 ran 5l, 3½l, 20l T Forster at Downton Tote £3 30 DF £4 70 CSF: £7 38

3.10 (3m 1f ch) 1, **CYBORGO** (R Dunwoody, 13-8 fav), 2, The Last Fling (R Guest, 11-2), 3, Judicious Captain (Mr C Storey, 33-1) ALSO RAN: 9-2 Bear Claw (ur), 6 Buckhouse Boy (f), Chopwell Curtains (pu), 11 Crown Equerry (pu) 7 ran. 3½l, dist M Pipe at Wellington. Tote £2 30, £1.70, £2 30 DF £5 70 CSF £9 65

3.45 (2m 6f ch) 1, **BLUE CHEEK** (Mr R Thornton, 9-2), 2, Highlandman (Mr C Wilson, 20-1), 3, Abbotsham (Mr E James, 33-1) ALSO RAN: 15-8 fav Mr Boston (f), 5 Chalpour (f), 6 Trifast Lad (6th), 7 Country Tarrogen (f), 14 Young Nimrod (5th), 20 Matt Reid (f) 40 Highway Five (f), 66 K C's Dancer (4th), 100 Faringo, Fordstown, Great Pokey. 14 ran. 17l, 1l, 1½l, 3½l, 18l J Mahon at Stratford-Upon-Avon Tote £5 40, £1 90, £3 70, £16 50 DF: £51.00 Trio: £1,284 10 CSF. £79 82

4.20 (3m 110yd hdle) 1, **FOREST IVORY** (R Johnson 11-2), 2, Private Peace (C F Swan, 11-2), 3, Mentmore Towers (B Powell, 5-1) ALSO RAN: 100-30 fav Yahmi (4th), 10 Salmon Breeze (pu), Tarrs Bridge (ur), 14 Spring Double (pu), Stormy Passage, 16 Lady Peta (6th), Silver Thyne (pu), 25 Flying Gunner (5th), 33 Hand Woven 12 ran Sh hd, 5l, 14l, 28l, 14l D Nicholson at Temple Guiting Tote: £7 50; £2 60, £1 70, £1 80 DF. £15 50 Trio: £29 90. CSF £33 72

4.50 (2m 4f hdle) 1, **CADOUGOLD** (C F Swan, 8-1), 2, Sheriffmuir (Mr R Thornton, 10-1), 3 Ambleside (D Bridgwater, 16-1) ALSO RAN: 4-1 fav Penny A Day (f), 5 Gales Cavalier, 6 Castle Sweep (bd), 7 Ashwell Boy (6th), 8 Allegation (5th), Frickley, 9 Outset (4th) 33 Lucky Blue, Tragic Hero 12 ran. NR: Well Armed 4l, ¾l, 1½l, 14l, 6l, M Pipe at Wellington. Tote £11.00, £2.80, £3.30, £4.90 DF £52 70 Trio £419 70 CSF. £93 57 Tricast £1,161 70.

5.20 (3m 1f ch) 1, **UNGUIDED MISSILE** (R Dunwoody 7-2), 2, Cab On Target (N Williamson 100-30 fav), 3, Bertone (C O Dwyer, 5-1) ALSO RAN. 7-2 Call It A Day (4th), 6 All For Luck (6th), 9 Fiveleigh Builds (5th), 33 Wudimp (pu) 7 ran. NR: General Pershing 1½l 3l, 1½l, 3l, 7l G Richards at Greystoke Tote: £3 20, £2 10, £1.80. DF: £4 50 CSF £13 81 Tricast £49.78.

Jackpot: £5,919 40.

Placepot: £609.40. **Quadpot**: £66.90.

Lingfield Park

Going: firm (turf course), standard (all-weather)

2.20 (5f) 1, Banningham Blade (Martin Dwyer, 33-1); 2, Loch Laird (33-1); 3, Flaming Ember (5-1) Days Of Grace 11-8 fav 7 ran NR: Nanoushka Hd hd K Ivory Tote. £30 00; £3 30, £5 40 DF: £69 20 CSF. £628 19

2.55 (6f) 1, Intisab (G Carter, 4-7 fav). 2, Malabi (5-1). 3, Deep Water (13-2). 6 ran ½l 4l R Armstrong Tote, £1 90; £1.10, £2 40 DF £4 10 CSF £3 68.

3.30 (1m 2f, AW) 1, Anak-Ku (Angela Gallimore, 14-1), 2, Paronomasia (33-1); 3, Shanghai Lil (8-1) Sweet Supposin 15-8 fav 10 ran ½l, 1½l Miss G Kelleway Tote: £19 60; £5 40, £6 30, £1 10 DF, £154 50 Trio £350 50 CSF £355 83 Tricast £3,553.44

4.05 (7f) 1, Barbason (Candy Morris, 4-1); 2, Erilon (7-2 jt-fav); 3, Rakis (7-2 jt-fav) Statovork 7-2 jt-fav 7 ran. NR: Sharp Shuttle 1½l, sh hd G L Moore. Tote £5 50, £2 60, £1 40 DF £2 70 CSF £17 44. Tricast £48 91.

4.40 (1m 2f, AW) 1, Davoski (M Hills, 5-2), 2, Protocol (11-8 fav), 3, Around Fore Alliss (10-1). 7 ran 1½l, nk. B Hills Tote: £2 60; £1 40, £2 10 DF: £2 60. CSF £6 02.

5.10 (5f, AW) 1, Apollo Red (Candy Morris, 6-1); 2, Robo Magic (6-1), 3, Intiaash (25-1) Purple Fling 3-1 fav. 12 ran 2½l, 3½l G L Moore Tote: £5 00, £1 30, £4 00, £9.00 DF: £18 60 Trio. £157.20 CSF: £46 69 Tricast: £829.76

Placepot: £10,649.70 (part won. Pool of £5,835.49 carried forward to Aintree today).

Quadpot: £27.00.

Sedgefield

Going: good to firm

2.10 (2m 5f 110yd hdle) 1, Amazing Sail (A S Smith, 8-1), 2, Nite Sprite (50-1), 3, Catton Lady (6-1). Mick The Yank 3-1 fav 15 ran 9l, 1½l Miss M Milligan Tote £10 70; £4.00. £89 30, £2 70. DF £264 90 Trio: not won (pool of £152 02 carried forward to 3 45 at Aintree today) CSF: £348.00. Tricast. £2,374 91

2.45 (2m 1f hdle) 1, Silver Minx (G Lee, 6-1), 2, Diamond Beach (2-1 fav), 3, So Clerks (5-2) 13 ran 3l, 1½l Mrs M Reveley Tote £6.30; £2 00, £1 50, £2 00 DF: £10.30 Trio. £12 00 CSF: £17 98

3.20 (2m 110yd ch) 1, Tapatch (A Dobbin, 9-4 fav). 2, Whitegates Willie (33-1); 3, Triona's Hope (50-1) 11 ran. Nk, 8l M W Easterby. Tote. £2.90; £1.10, £4.20, £6 10 DF: £33 10. Trio: £169 80 (part won Pool of £217 64 carried forward to 3.45 at Aintree today). CSF: £62.28.

3.55 (2m 5f ch) 1, Rustic Air (W Dwan, 9-4); 2, The Toaster (2-1 fav), 3, Reve De Valse (7-2) 5 ran NR: German Legend 2½l, 7l J Fitzgerald Tote: £2 90; £1.30, £1.20 DF: £2 60. CSF: £5.79.

4.30 (3m 3f ch) 1, Greenmount Lad (Mr P Cornforth, 10-11 fav); 2, Le Maje (12-1), 3, Upwell (3-1) 5 ran. 6l, 9l J Cornforth Tote £1.80, £1 90, £1.40 DF £11.50 CSF: £10 44

5.00 (2m 1f hdle) 1, Glenugie (N Bentley, 5-2 fav). 2, Skiddaw Samba (9-1), 3, Highland Way (5-1). 10 ran. 1½l, 10l. G Moore. Tote £3 40; £1 40, £2 40, £2.10 DF: £15.20 Trio: £67 40 CSF £27.03. Tricast £105.94

Placepot: £66.40. **Quadpot**: £10.50.

TODAY'S POINT-TO-POINT MEETINGS: Bramham Moor at Wetherby, inside NH course (first race 1 00); Curre at Howick, 2m W of Chepstow (1.00); Fitzwilliam at Cottenham, 4m N of Cambridge (1 45). Royal Artillery at Larkhill, 5m N of Amesbury (1 00)

TOMORROW: Belvoir at Garthorpe, 6m E of Melton Mowbray (2 00), Blackmore & Sparkford Vale at Charlton Horethorne, 5m NE of Sherborne (2 00), Cheshire Forest at Tabley, 1m W of Knutsford (2.00), Jedforest at Friars Haugh, W of Kelso (2 00). Silverton at Black Forest Lodge, 5m SW of Exeter (1 30), Tivyside at Pantyderi, 6m W of Newcastle Emlyn (1 00). West Kent at Penshurst, 2m S of town (1 30).

TUESDAY: Heythrop at Heythrop, 2m NE of Chipping Norton (2 05).

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4½ miles, Aintree 3.45pm, Live on BBC TV.

10/1 Avro Anson
10/1 Go Ballistic
10/1 Lord Gyllene
10/1 Suny Bay
10/1 Wylde Hide
12/1 Lo Stregone
12/1 Smith's Band
14/1 General Wolfe
16/1 Antonin
16/1 Nahthen Lad
25/1 Belmont King
25/1 Buckboard Bounce
25/1 Feathered Gale
25/1 Killeshin
25/1 Master Oats
33/1 Dextra Dove
33/1 Turning Trix
40/1 Evangelica
40/1 New Co
40/1 River Mandate
40/1 Valiant Warrior
50/1 Bishops Hall
50/1 Glemot
50/1 Northern Hide
66/1 Back Bar
66/1 Full Of Oats
66/1 Grange Brake
66/1 Mugoni Beach
66/1 Straight Talk
100/1 Camelot Knight
100/1 Celtic Abbey
100/1 Dakyns Boy
100/1 Nuaffe
100/1 Scribbler
150/1 Pink Gin
150/1 Plastic Spaceage
150/1 Spuffington
200/1 Over The Stream
250/1 Don't Light Up
N/R Master Boston

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10/1 Go Ballistic
10/1 Lord Gyllene
10/1 Suny Bay
10/1 Wylde Hide
11/1 Lo Stregone
12/1 Smith's Band
14/1 Antonin
14/1 General Wolfe
16/1 Nahthen Lad
20/1 Feathered Gale
20/1 Turning Trix
25/1 Master Oats
28/1 Belmont King
28/1 Killeshin
33/1 Buckboard B.
40/1 Dextra Dove
40/1 Evangelica
40/1 New Co
40/1 Northern Hide
40/1 River Mandate
50/1 Bishops Hall
50/1 Grange Brake
66/1 Celtic Abbey
66/1 Full of Oats
66/1 Glemot
66/1 Straight Talk
66/1 Valiant Warrior
100/1 Back Bar
100/1 Mugoni Beach
100/1 Nuaffe
100/1 Pink Gin
150/1 Camelot Knight
150/1 Dakyns Boy
150/1 Scribbler
150/1 Spuffington
200/1 Don't Light Up
200/1 Over The Stream
200/1 Plastic Spaceage
*Master Boston

*Trainer states non-runner

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TENNIS: BRITISH HOPES REJUVENATED AS DAVIS CUP NOVICE PROVES TOO TALL AN ORDER FOR BLACK

Richardson rises to the challenge

By Alix Ramsay

HUGH ROUTLEDGE

Richardson shows the poise, power and determination that took him to an unexpected victory for Britain at Crystal Palace yesterday

FROM the very depths of gloom and despondency, Andrew Richardson emerged as the British Davis Cup team's unlikeliest hero yesterday. With Zimbabwe 1-0 up in their Euro-African zone group one tie, thanks to Jamie Delgado's spectacular collapse in the opening match, Richardson fought through his first five-set encounter to beat Byron Black 3-6, 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Chosen as Britain's No 2 player, he was expected to be little more than cannon fodder against Zimbabwe's leading player, who is the only man ranked in the top 50 to be appearing at Crystal Palace this weekend. The only hint of hope had been Black's wary approach to playing tall left-handers. When he came to London he assumed he would be playing — and worrying about — Greg Rusedski. Instead, while Rusedski nursed a wrist injury that may keep him out of Wimbledon this year, he found himself up against 6ft 7in Richardson. The outcome was much the same.

Richardson started nervously, losing his service in the opening game and never able to get back on level terms. It seemed to be the beginning of a fairly rapid end for Britain, especially after Richardson lost an early advantage in the second set. Eventually, though, he got his booming service going. In total, he thumped down 22 aces, keeping Black on the back foot and, by the end of the fourth set, it was Black who was looking flustered.

Richardson's reach, height and strength were beginning to pay dividends. Going for almost every shot and showing little fear, he nailed Black with backhands down the line and across the court. He tried his luck at the net, but when he was forced into long rallies from the back of the court he traded shots with growing confidence. With neither man able to gain the advantage in the fourth set until the very end, it was Black, the world No 46, who crumbled, sacrificing his service and the set with a double fault.

Entering new territory in the fifth set, Richardson had the crowd — a full house at 2,300 — cheering as he broke for a 4-2 lead. He lost his own service straightaway but there was a feeling in the air that he was the man of the moment. He went all out for the Black service, pumpng two winning forhands down the line. As the second left Black stranded, the tall but self-effacing Briton looked as if he could not quite believe what he had done.

David Lloyd, the Britain captain, who had had a resigned look about him as the match began, knew exactly what Richardson had achieved. He had never seen a Davis Cup debut like it. "To come back like that after starting of nervously was fantastic," he said. "From there he went from strength to strength. It was a terrific performance."

Delgado had only flattered to deceive at the beginning of the first rubber, against Wayne Black, Byron's younger brother. Storming away with the first set, he found himself playing an opponent pertrified with stage fright. That gave the 20-year-old British No 5 a chance to show what he could do.

Taking Black's service apart with his backhand returns, keeping him confined to defensive duties on the baseline with a range of shots that belied his world ranking of No 260. When it came to the crunch, however, a set ahead and serving to level the scores at 4-4, he made a crucial error. Jumping to put away a smash on game point, he took his eye off the ball and dumped it into the net. Two points later he was 5-3 down and drowning.

The errors had already started to creep into his game by then, and, once Black had taken the second set, they came thick and fast. In all he served 13 double faults, three of them on break points, as he collapsed quickly and quietly to lose 2-6, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3. It was rather as Black had expected, in the light of his opponent's racing start. "Jamie was just too good for me in the first set and I kind of expected a let down, but maybe not quite such a let down," he said. "He started missing his first serves and that gave me more chances."

Luckily for Lloyd, Richardson was on hand to revive Britain's hopes.

Great Britain level with Zimbabwe, 1-1

RESULTS (GB names first): J Delgado lost to W Black 2-6, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3; A Richardson bt B Black 3-6, 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

TO PLAY: Today (2.0): N Broad and M Petchey v B Black and W Black. Tomorrow (2.0): Delgado v B Black, Richardson v W Black.

RUGBY LEAGUE

Injuries threaten early surge by raging Bulls

By Christopher Irvine

WITH two forwards in plaster and another suspended, Bradford Bulls are in a position where they cannot afford any more injuries or indiscipline to undermine their position at the top of the Stones Super League.

Warren Jowitt, who broke his ankle in the victory at Castleford on Tuesday, and Jeremy Donougher, injured earlier in the season, will definitely miss the Silk Cut Challenge Cup final against St Helens on May 3. Unless Brian McDermott's appeal against a four-match ban for striking three opponents in the semi-final defeat of Leeds Rhinos is successful, he will only be available for one league match before Wembley.

In the fall-out from that notorious semi-final, Matthew Elliott, the Bradford coach, has escaped a possible disrepute charge for his post-match criticisms of the referee, but his injury problems are mounting. "Our depth is being tested and we certainly can't afford any more injuries," he said.

The London Broncos side that Bradford overcame with ease on the road to Wembley will be a different proposition at Odsal tomorrow night. They are unbeaten in three outings and are tucked behind Bradford, who have played one match fewer, in a clutch of six teams on six points.

Shaun Edwards must settle for a third appearance on the bench, with Josh White in a rich vein of form at scrum half. Tony Currie, the London coach, has named an unchanged starting team, but the addition to the squad of Matthew Salter, the Great Britain Academy prop, has further strengthened the English contingent in the Broncos' mainly Australian line-up.

Not surprisingly, Warrington Wolves stick with the side that defeated Wigan Warriors on Monday for the visit of Oldham Bears, which will be Darryl Van De Velde's first game in charge at Wilderspool. Oldham are without a Super League win, but the side have been reassured by Andy Goodway that he will be staying as coach until the end of the season.

Goodway had hinted at resignation, joining the recent trend that has seen four of the 12 Super League clubs part company with their coaches after only three weeks of the campaign. Goodway was mentioned in relation to the job at Castleford, before John Joyner's departure on Thursday, but that vacancy is being advertised and Mick Morgan has taken temporary charge for the visit tomorrow to Sheffield Eagles.

Castleford, who are without the injured trio of Dean Sampson, Grant Anderson and Nathan Sykes, move Andrew Schick from the bench to the second row and Richard Russell replaces Lee St Hilaire at hooker. Sheffield have shuffled their back division after the defeat at St Helens on Monday. Whetu Taewa is moved from the wing into the centre and Keith Senior and Nick Pinkney are partnered on the left side.

John Pendlebury is undefeated in three matches in charge of Halifax Blue Sox, who entertain a Salford Reds side whose unbeaten league record will be severely tested.

Bobbie Goulding returns to the St Helens team tonight after serving a six-match ban for a high tackle. Goulding will resume his half-back partnership with Tommy Martyn, who is returning from injury, for the Stones Super League match away to Paris Saint-Germain.

Glory in absurd pillar of Wisden

SIMON BARNES

On Saturday

THE latest edition of *Wisden* emerges, and the Editor's words hammer mercilessly at various muddled, confused, incompetent and bloody-minded persons of English cricket, while celebrating the glories of the game — many of which lie in its absurdities.

The now annual treasure trove, the Index of Unusual Occurrences, includes: batsman reaches Test century during tea interval; bogus batsman faces ball; England match abandoned through boredom; Muntjac fawn in members' enclosures and player takes tea in middle.

A story that appeared in this column, about the fielder who returned the ball by bus, has the honour of appearing in the Editor's Notes. The winner of this column's competition will be announced next week.

The latest *Wisden* shows a highly successful season for Sussex. Ranjitsinhji topped the averages with 76.33, from C. B. Fry. The editor was moaning on about the state of pitches in England: "The climax was reached during the past season at Leyton, the wicket on that ground being so superlatively good that it was almost impossible in fine weather to play a game out."

Four-day cricket? It could never happen here. This is a reprint from the 1902 edition, which is obtainable from The Willows Publishing Company, 17 The Willows, Stone, Staffordshire.

Let us play

"If you all hate St Sulpice clap your hands . . ." A kind of World Cup for training Roman Catholic priests is to be held this week. Seminarians from Tournai, Namur and Liège, in Belgium, St Sulpice, in Paris, Wonersh, in Surrey, Allen Hall, in Chelsea, Ushaw, in Durham, and Maynooth, in Ireland, will play in a football tournament that ends with a final on Wednesday at Oscott College, in Sutton Coldfield. The cup will be presented by the Archbishop of Birmingham.

Weah's way

George Weah, the Liberian winner of the world footballer of the year award, has long been a hero of this column, and he continues to build on that heroic status.

Liberia are due to play a World Cup qualifying match against Egypt on Sunday (though, Weah's club, AC Milan, are still trying to change the fixture so that their main man can play for them). Naturally, the match cannot be held in Liberia, because of the troubles there.

It will be held in Ghana. The costs of the trip, around £20,000, will be born by Weah himself. This has happened several times before — the Government always promises to repay him, and never does. Weah also bankrolls a Liberian team called Junior Professionals.

☐ *toboggan run, from swerve of snow to bend of ice, bring us by commodious vicus of recirculation back to Japan and the Olympic Games. Yes, if I may be pardoned a jocoserious Joycean reference, Ireland is to receive assistance from the International Olympic Committee Solidarity Fund in order to prepare a toboggan team for the winter Olympics, which take place in Nagano next winter.*

Legal brief

Memo to Middlesbrough FC, which is considering legal action in an attempt to get its three points back, points that were deducted for the failure to put out a team against Blackburn Rovers: Augusto Ledoiro, the president of the Spanish club Deportivo La Coruña, took Fifa to court to protest against his own 18-month suspension from the game. But the world governing body's stand is that it is illegal to take legal action against them. For his temerity, Fifa fined Ledoiro 100,000 Swiss francs.

SNOOKER: DAVIS OR HENDRY AWAITS AS WELSHMAN QUELLS EBDON'S STUBBORN RESISTANCE

Williams holds his nerve to reach final

By Phil Yates

MARK WILLIAMS overcame a considerable attack of nerves under intense pressure to beat Peter Ebdon 6-5 in a dramatic conclusion to their semifinal at the British Open, in Plymouth, yesterday. He now meets Stephen Hendry or Steve Davis for the £60,000 first prize.

Williams, winner of the Regal Welsh Open and Grand Prix titles last year, had required only 71 and 61 minutes respectively to beat Nick Pearce and Tony Drago in two of the earlier rounds but, as expected, Ebdon displayed a stubborn streak after a low-key start.

Breaks of 49 and 87 helped Ebdon to enter the mid-session interval on level terms at 2-2 but Williams, renowned for his ability to seize any match by the throat, reeled off the next three frames in quick succession to lead 5-2.

Williams, uninhibited in his shot selection and clearly determined to play to his strengths, pulled off a series of raking pots from distance that led to breaks of 70, 34, 47, 39 and 30. However, Ebdon's reputation as a tenacious battler is well chronicled and known to Williams from personal experience.

Ebdon beat him 5-4 in the last 16 of the International Open two months' ago after he had been 3-1 in arrears.

After failing to bother the scorers in the eighth frame, Williams then missed a red across the top cushion when 22-0 up in the ninth. Ebdon fearlessly doubled a red to a middle pocket and went on to construct a break of 80 to reduce his deficit to only 5-4.

By now, Williams was feeling Ebdon's breath on the back of his neck and the pressure mounted for the Welshman when his surrender of the tenth frame ensured that the contest would run to the wire.

Williams, leading 23-4 in the decider, wasted a good opportunity when his shirt cuff grazed a red but, when Ebdon left the blue over a baulk pocket with a misjudged safety, Williams dispatched it to leave his rival needing a snooker that he proved unable to lay.

"I should have won a lot earlier, so, because of that, and what was at stake, I was really under the cosh on those last few colours," Williams said. "I am well aware that Peter never waves the white flag and, as he fought back, he looked stronger and stronger."

The prospect of playing Davis or Hendry — with 12 world titles, 135 tournament wins and more than £10 million in total career prize-money between them — clearly does not appeal to Williams. Asked which of them he would prefer to tackle, the Welshman quipped: "Neither. I wish it was Willie Thorne instead."

Results, page 47

SQUASH

Nicol takes off after four years of failure

By Colin McQuillan

PETER NICOL, having ended the first-round jinx that has blighted his progress in the British Open championship for the past four years, yesterday became the first Scotsman to reach the semi-finals of the competition since 1963, when Michael Oddy went on to lose to Abou Taleb, of Egypt, in the final.

Nicol, moving smoothly but with electric sharpness, overcame Brett Martin, of Australia, 15-10, 15-11, 13-15, 15-12 in the Leekes-sponsored event in Cardiff.

An uncharacteristic change-down in gear by his 34-year-old opponent halfway through the second game took Nicol by surprise and probably cost him the third game.

"It was a bit unnerving to find Brett slow-balling in a British Open quarter-final," Nicol said. "Then when I got to match ball, at 14-10 in the fourth, Brett suddenly went into overdrive and I had to adjust to a blitz of shots."

More specifically, Nicol had to survive a backhand cross-court flick into the right nick from Martin, then a whiplash backhand drive to the deep right corner and a blindingly complicated rally that eventually left him stranded inside his opponent's racket swing and minus a penalty point.

Had Martin's next crashing forehand not clipped the top of the tin, Oddy's record might have lasted at least a game longer. "Brett was tired by that time, but when he is tired he is so lethal," Nicol said.

His semi-final opponent will be Rodney Eyles, the No 2 seed from Australia, who fought back from 1-2 down against Jonathon Power, of Canada, to win 15-13, 5-15, 9-15, 15-12, 15-11 in 95 minutes.

In the women's event, Sue Wright, of Kent, the British national champion, defeated Linda Charman, of Sussex, 9-7, 9-5, 9-4 to reach a semi-final against Sarah Fitz-Gerald, the No 1 seed and world champion, from Australia.

In the bottom half of the draw, Fiona Geaves, of Gloucester, was due to meet Jane Martin, of Northumbria, with a semi-final against Michelle Martin, the No 2 seed from Australia, awaiting the winner.

EQUESTRIANISM

Hickstead season in jeopardy

HICKSTEAD may be closed for the 1997 season because of a financial crisis at the "Wimbledon of showjumping" (John Goodbody writes). Already the Nations Cup has been moved to the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

Yesterday, Douglas Bunn, the master of Hickstead, warned of closure if money is not found to support the Royal International Horse Show (July 10-13) and the British Jumping Derby meeting (August 14-17.

David Broome, who won the Nations Cup six times and who is now chairman of the British Show Jumping Association (BSJA), described the threat to Hickstead, founded in 1960, as "a great shame, and that is an understatement". Silk Cut, former sponsor of the Nations Cup, has transferred resources into Formula One motor racing. Andrew Finding, the BSJA secretary general, said yesterday that the big sports, such as football and motor racing, were "sucking in a high percentage of sponsorships. It is not a problem unique to the United Kingdom".

However, it is understood that the Royal Windsor Horse Show, from May 14-18, has obtained sponsorship worth £600,000, including backing from Samsung for the Nations Cup. Simon Brooks-Ward, the show director, said: "Although we have to admit that showjumping has seen better days, with a bit of initiative and decisive action, the sport will rise again."

CRICKET: IRELAND HAVE TO PLAY FAVOURITES IN ICC TROPHY SEMI-FINAL

World Cup door ajar for Scotland

From A Correspondent
in Kuala Lumpur

IRELAND and Scotland reached the semi-final stage of the ICC Trophy for the first time yesterday to guarantee local opposition for England in the 1999 World Cup. With three of the last four assured of an invitation, Ireland and Scotland will be forced to play-off for a place should they lose difficult matches to Kenya and Bangladesh over the next four days.

Ireland have the unenviable task of tackling Kenya tomorrow in the first semi-final. Kenya have proved a class above and, in Martin Suji, they have the best bowler in the tournament. He took three for 18 from his ten overs against Scotland in the final round of quarter-final group matches to earn the Kenyans a victory on run-rate.

Scotland had bowled out the favourites for 153 and, with Suji's quota of overs completed, they might well have gone close to a surprise win from a sturdy base of 37 for three from 23 overs had the rain not arrived.

Ireland have a net session booked for this morning after wayward bowling contributed 28 wides to Hong Kong's total of 172. For a while, Ireland had thought their win by 51 runs would be enough to avoid Kenya, but Bangladesh rallied to beat Holland in the decisive match in group F.

The Dutch scored 171 against a tight attack and then had Bangladesh in trouble on 56 for four when a storm broke over the ground. Holland, who would have gone out if there had been no resumption, were delighted to restart with Bangladesh facing a revised target of 141 from 33 overs. Akram Khan was equal to the task, though, hitting 67 not out to get Bangladesh home with three wickets and eight balls in hand.

Results, page 47

HOCKEY: WEEKEND OF DECISIVE ENCOUNTERS IN MEN'S AND WOMEN'S LEAGUES

Teddington waiting for Reading to slip

By Sydney Friskin

AFTER finishing runners-up in the European Cup Winners' Cup last Monday, Reading's next objective is the National League premier division title, which will be theirs if they defeat Cannock at home tomorrow. If Reading lose or draw, Teddington, only a point behind, will win the trophy if they beat Canterbury at Chiswick.

Except for Hughes-Rowlands, who is injured, Cannock will take a full-strength side to Reading. If the home side can maintain their momentum, with Pearn and Ashdown setting the pace up front, they will be hard to beat. Teddington will miss Tyrone Moore, their reliable defender, who is not available, but are still expecting a win.

Barford Tigers and Surbiton will be fighting for survival at the other end of the table. Surbiton, who entertain Hounslow, know that a win will keep them up. If Surbiton lose or draw, they will leave the escape hatch open for Barford, who would need to beat East Grinstead to survive.

Beeston and Doncaster have already earned promotion to the premier division. Crostyx and Trojans will be relegated to their respective regional leagues, but three other clubs — Oxford University, Edgbaston and City of Portsmouth — are not yet safe and two of them will end up in the inter-league play-offs at Milton Keynes later this month.

Slough aim to keep treble hopes alive

By A Special Correspondent

JANE SMITH, the Slough and England striker, will be hoping to celebrate more than her 28th birthday today when she plays against her former club, Ipswich, in the first of two contests between the teams this weekend that could set either on the way to league and cup glory.

With two games remaining in the premiership, Ipswich, one point clear at the head of the table, know that victory over their nearest challengers will be enough to secure the championship. Slough, naturally, have other ideas. The indoor champions are still in with a chance of lifting all three domestic trophies.

"I'll have mixed feelings when we get on the pitch because I had two good seasons at Ipswich," Smith said. "It's weird being clubmates one year and rivals the next. I had to leave because I couldn't keep commuting from London and they understood that."

Smith, capped 57 times by England, believes that the result today will have a strong influence on the outcome of the sixth-round AEWHA Cup tie tomorrow.

"The side with the strongest mental approach will triumph," she said. "Both squads are pretty evenly matched when it comes to skill.

"It will come down to which club wants it the most. We certainly won't be celebrating if we win the league match, because we're treating both games equally seriously."

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APRIL 5 1997

RUGBY UNION

Callard omitted as Bath attempt to climb from trough

By David Hands, Rugby Correspondent

THIS has already been the worst of seasons for Bath since the introduction, ten years ago, of league rugby to England. Were they to lose against Wasps at Loftus Road tomorrow, further salt would be rubbed into an already raw wound, because it would be *the first time that any team* had achieved a league double against them.

Previously, Bath's worst performance in the league was in the inaugural season, when they lost four matches. Defeat by Sale in midweek was their fifth loss of the 1996-97 campaign, a sequence that includes Wasps' 40-36 win at the Recreation Ground. Is it merely coincidence that Bath's slump has been matched in France by Toulouse, who have dominated their domestic scene for so long and who had similar European ambitions?

It could be said that Toulouse, *champions for the past* three years, were also brought up short by Wasps when they lost 77-17 at Loftus Road. That prompted a period of introspection and since January 4, when Leicester ended their reign as Heineken Cup holders, they have lost four times. At the same time their leading players, Christian Califano and Thomas Castaignède, are *being hawked* around the wealthier English clubs, which has further disturbed *them.*

Nothing in sport lasts for ever, as Toulouse and Bath would acknowledge, but *it is a painful process of self-discovery.* That process extends to Jonathan Callard, an England squad member this season, but now dropped by Bath in favour of the promising Matt Perry, whose versatility has allowed him to cover every threequarter position but seldom that of full back.

Perry, a likely member of the England Under-21 tour party to Australia this summer, plays behind a pack reinforced by the two Argentina internationals, Federico Mendéz and German Llanes, whose opportunities have been slim since his arrival at Bath in January. However, they encounter a Wasps side whose confidence remains high, despite losing to Leicester in midweek.

Equally significant for the league leaders will be the attendance at Loftus Road, where crowds in recent weeks have been disappointing. Having experienced the fervent *atmosphere created by* 17,000 at Welford Road three days ago, Wasps would appreciate similar support and their achievements this season justify it.

Francois Pienaar had hoped to return for Saracens against Gloucester today after shoulder and hamstring injuries, but the South African must be content to start among the replacements. The two Ireland internationals, Richard Wallace and Paddy Johns, return with Mark Evans, the director of rugby, demanding some "major results" from his players.

"*First we want Harlequins* and Bath *to show further signs of vulnerability so that they drop out of the leading* four," Evans said, acknowledging the jostling queue for a place in the Heineken Cup next season. Not that either will be in obliging mood, least of all Harlequins, whose range of talent is such that a place in Europe should be cut and dried. They entertain Saracens next Wednesday, so take the opportunity against London Irish today to rest such internationals as Laurent Benezech and Gareth Llewellyn.

Having disposed of Richmond, the second division leaders, a week ago, Newcastle will be in confident mood at Bedford, though they will do well to keep Mike Rayer in check. The former Wales full back has been outstanding for Bedford this season and has accumulated 328 points, which poses a genuine threat to the club *record of 351 established by* Neil Bennett in 1976.

Wales still wrestling with eight of the best

By David Hands

THE leading clubs in Wales go into the league programme today with half an eye on the events of tomorrow, when the Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) holds a special meeting at St David's Hall, in Cardiff, to explain the necessity for an eight-club first division next season. Without such an elite, club representatives will be told, prospects for the 1999 World Cup — hosted by Wales — will be impaired.

"With only two years to the World Cup, I think another season lost will leave us in a very difficult position," Terry Cobner, the WRU director of rugby, said. "Not only will we lose a year, but the other countries will gain a year on us. In effect, that's a two-year backward step."

The clubs contend, however, that the automatic demotion of four clubs is too much in the first season of professional rugby, and that they should be given a season's grace. Indeed, the league champions, Neath, are too close for comfort to that relegation zone.

Neath play Cardiff in Cardiff's first match since the return of Alex Evans from Australia as director of rugby, though much of the attention will be focussed on Swansea's game with Ebbw Vale — the two meet in the Swalec Cup semi-final next weekend — and Llanelli's drive towards the top of the league. They have a potentially awkward game with Dunvant and have withdrawn three young players — Craig Warlow, Tristan Davies and Aled Thomas — from Trinity College, Camarthen's tour to the United States because of their long casualty list.

Olazábal's mastery of difficult greens helped his second-round surge up the leaderboard at English Turn

Olazabal strikes upbeat tempo

From John Hopkins
Golf Correspondent
in New Orleans

IN BOURBON Street here, old men with white hair sing *about letting the good times* roll, as clarinet, saxophone and trumpet help provide a *foot-tapping* beat. At the English Turn Golf and Country Club, about 15 miles from the city, *the good times continued* to roll for José Maria Olazábal yesterday.

By one consideration, Olazábal hit only one poor stroke on the outward half of his second round, an iron from the fairway at the 2nd, which he dragged left. He was as quickly into his stride as Greg Norman had been the previous day, having also started at the unearthly hour of 7.36am.

Olazábal birdied the 3rd, by holing a 12-foot putt, and the 8th and 9th. Out in 33, he played the inward half in 34 for a round of 67, five under par. "I have no complaints in any department," he said. "I struck the ball really well."

Olazábal *likes* New Orleans and he likes the test that is posed by the Jack Nicklaus-designed course over which the Freeport McDermott Classic is played. "This course has very hard greens," he said on Thursday evening as he practised after his first round, a level-par 72. "It is difficult to put the ball in the right places. *You need a good short game* here. If you can manage your way around this course it is good *news for next week.*"

Next week is on everyone's mind. Next week is the Mas*ters.* Next week is the first major championship of the year. Next week is as important for Olazábal as any other leading player, but for a different reason.

While his peers, such as Nick Faldo, Davis Love III and Phil Mickelson, are rightly considered to be genuine contenders at Augusta, Olazábal, the 1994 champion, is glad to be well enough to compete. He has no realistic chance of winning. Or has he? It would be the comeback story to end all comeback stories if Olazábal were to win in what would be only his fifth tournament in 20 months.

"*It's the comeback story of* the year already," Brad Faxon said, one of many generous *tributes Olazábal has received* from the American players. Certainly, there has been a rare edge to his game, one not normally present in one who has been absent for so long.

Olazábal looked tired as he finished his post-round practice session on Thursday evening. And so he should. The man who less than a year ago had to crawl around his home in Spain, had walked for 4½ hours, stood around while being interviewed and then subjected himself to a half-hour session on the range. As if that wasn't enough, he then went off to practise his putting.

The first round of this tournament was notable for the way the early starters benefited from the relatively calm conditions. The three leaders, who had 65s, all *played in the morning, as did* Norman, who had a 67. Thirteen of the 20 sub-70 scores were recorded in the morning.

The leaders were Scott McCarron, the defending champion, Larry Rinker, a journeyman professional who played guitar in the group of touring professionals named Jake Trout and the Flounders, and David Toms. Each scored 32 on the front nine and 33 coming home. Each made seven birdies and no bogeys. Each had 25 putts and each hit 14 of 18 greens in regulation.

Ben Crenshaw showed signs of a welcome return to form, he too benefiting from playing in the morning. The champion here in 1994, when *Olazábal* finished second, Crenshaw has had more rounds in the eighties than in *the sixties this year and has* not yet won a penny — the worst start to any of his 23 *years as a professional golfer.* His 71 must have felt like a 67.

LEADING FIRST-ROUND SCORES

US unless stated

65: Larry Rinker, S McCarron, D Toms. 66: H Kase (Japan). 67: G Norman (Aus), L Silveira. 68: N Lancaster, R Tway, S Hoch, B Hughes (Aus), B Mayfair, B Faxon, T Tryba. 69: J Kelly, Y Kaneko (Japan), P Stewart, B Henninger, D Love, L Wadkins, M Dawson. 70: D Hammond, D Pride, K Burton, D Stockton Jr, S Pate, D Waldorf, P Jacobsen, M Standly, C Sullivan, D Tewell, J Huston, M Brooks, R Cochran, J Dowdall, M Christie.

71: S Simpson, H Royer, S Dunlap, S Elkington (Aus), E Dougherty, B McCallister, B Glasson, B Crenshaw, C Rocca (It), M Reid, F Lickliter, D Barron, R Black, B Bryant, R Damron, P Claxton, L Clements, J O'Keefe, K Sutherland, E Johnson.

72: T Armour, M Wiebe, T Herron, J Leonard, J Parnevik (Swe), C Perry, D Hart, P Jordan, P Horgan, P Tataurangi (NZ), J Green, T Pence, J Hayes, S Hart, D Sutherland, P Blackmar, C Bowden, G Day, J Sindelar, J Gallagher, S Lowey, J M Olazabal (Sp), K Triplett, H Sutton, J Edwards, L Porter, A Doyle, A Rodriguez. 73: J Delsing, K Gibson, C Byrum, C Rose, M Springer, W Grady (Aus), M Heinen, B Geiberger, T Mollica, G Waite (NZ), O Browne, B Wolcott.

IN BRIEF

Rain delays start of fourth Test

HEAVY showers delayed the start of the opening day of the fourth Test match between West Indies and India in Antigua yesterday. With the outfield sodden and the likelihood of further rain, there was no prospect of play getting under way before the second scheduled session at the earliest.

India received a setback before play was due to start. Navjot Sidhu, their opening batsman, was taken ill with malarial flu, thus giving a reprieve to Venkata Laxman, his opening partner in the first three Tests, who was left out of the original 12.

In Sharjah, Pakistan gifted victory to Sri Lanka in their 50-over Sharjah Cup match yesterday. Set a target of 244 by the world champions, Pakistan were well placed at 173 for four in the 38th over, but *collapsed to 224 for nine.*

Aravinda de Silva earned the man-of-the-match award with his innings of 97, putting on 184 for the Sri Lankan third wicket with Marvan Atapattu, who made 94.

Bowls: Cyphers, of Beckenham, begin their defence of their national indoor fours title at Melton Mowbray today. Whiteknights, of Reading, and a strong Cumbria quartet are expected to be their main rivals. The triples gets under way tomorrow with Tony Allcock, the world outdoor singles champion, *among those in action.*

Skiing: Chemine Alcott, 15, landed her third consecutive girls' title on the final day of the British Land British children's championships in Tignes, France, yesterday. Alcott, from Twickenham, won the super giant slalom by more than seven seconds over the two runs. Her combined winning time was 0.45sec faster than that of the boys' champion, Tom Brown, 15, of Torquay.

Cycling: Rob Hayles goes into the fourth round of the Premier Calendar road-race series tomorrow with an unbeaten record from the first three races. As well as Britain's elite riders, Hayles faces a formidable challenge *from Danish, Dutch and* French riders in the *Cycling Weekly* Grand Prix over a *106-mile* Beaconsfield-based circuit.

GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND'S FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated
* denotes all-ticket match

FA Carling Premiership

(1) Aston Villa v Everton
(-) Chelsea v Arsenal (11.15)
(2) Manchester Utd v Derby
(3) Newcastle v Sunderland
(4) Nottingham Forest v Southampton
(-) Tottenham v Wimbledon

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	31	18	9	4	61	33	63
Liverpool	31	17	9	5	53	26	60
Arsenal	32	16	9	7	52	28	57
Newcastle	30	15	7	8	59	36	52
A Villa	31	14	8	9	37	27	50
Chelsea	31	13	10	8	51	44	49
Sheff Wed	31	12	13	6	41	37	49
Wimbledon	30	12	10	8	42	37	46
Leeds	32	11	8	13	26	34	41
Tottenham	31	11	6	14	38	43	39
Leicester	31	10	9	12	37	44	39
Blackburn	31	8	12	11	33	32	36
Everton	31	9	9	13	37	45	36
Derby	31	8	11	12	35	47	35
West Ham	31	8	9	14	31	41	33
Sunderland	32	8	9	15	29	48	33
†Middlesbro	31	9	8	14	44	52	32
Nottm F	33	6	13	14	28	49	31
Coventry	32	6	12	14	27	46	30
Southampton	31	6	9	16	39	51	27

†Middlebrough deducted three points

Nationwide League

First division

(5) Barnsley v Birmingham
(6) Bolton v QPR
(7) Charlton v Manchester City
(8) Crystal Palace v Huddersfield
(9) Ipswich v Oldham
(10) Oxford Utd v Port Vale
(11) Portsmouth v Grimsby
(12) Sheff Utd v West Bromwich
(13) Stoke v Reading
(14) Swindon v Southend
(15) Wolverhampton v Norwich

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolton	40	24	12	4	86	48	84
Barnsley	39	19	13	7	64	44	70
Wolvrhmptn	40	19	9	12	57	43	66
Sheff Utd	41	18	11	12	69	49	65
Port Vale	41	15	15	11	51	48	60
C Palace	38	16	11	11	68	39	59
Norwich	41	16	11	14	59	60	59
Portsmth	40	17	8	15	51	45	59
Ipswich	40	15	13	12	55	49	58
QPR	41	15	12	14	55	55	57
Stoke	40	16	9	15	46	50	57
Tranmere	40	15	11	14	54	50	56
Swindon	41	15	7	19	52	63	52
Oxford Utd	41	14	9	18	57	59	51
Charlton	39	14	9	16	46	54	51
Birmingham	39	13	12	14	43	45	51
Reading	40	13	11	16	49	57	50
Man City	38	14	8	16	48	49	50
Huddersfld	40	12	12	16	44	56	48
West Brom	40	11	14	15	61	66	47
Bradford	40	10	11	19	42	64	41
Grimsby	39	9	12	18	52	71	39
Oldham	39	9	11	19	44	53	38
Southend	41	8	13	20	39	75	37

(Not including last night's result)

DR MARTENS LEAGUE: Premier division: Ashford v Cambridge City; Burton Albion v Crawley; Gravesend and Northfleet v Baldock; Halesowen v Merthyr; Hastings v Dorchester; Kings Lynn v Gresley; Nuneaton v Cheltenham; Salisbury v Sittingbourne; Sudbury Town v Chelmsford. Midland division: Bilston v Evesham; Grantham v Hinckley Town; Ilkeston v Bedworth; Raunds T v R C Warwick; Redditch v Moor Green; Shepshed D v Paget R; Solihull Boro v Dudley Town; Stafford v Tamworth; Sutton Coldfield Town v Stourbridge; V S Rugby v Rothwell. Southern division: Bashley v Clevedon; Buckingham Town v Dartford; Erith and Belvedere v Havant; Fareham v Cirencester Town; Forest Green v Newport (IoW); Margate v Fleet T; Tonbridge Angels v Witney; Trowbridge v Cinderford; Weston-super-Mare v St Leonards; Weymouth v Waterlooville; Yate v Fisher London

ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE: Premier division: Burnham Ramblers v Great Wakering; East Ham v Brentwood; Hullbridge Sports v Ford United; Saffron Walden v Ilford; Southend Manor v Stansted.

LONDON SPARTAN LEAGUE: Premier division: Barkingside v Waltham Abbey; Cockfosters v Brimsdown; Hanwell v Hillingdon Boro; Islington St Marys v Beaconsfield SYCOB; Ruislip Manor v Croydon; Woodford v Amersham.

Second division

(16) Brentford v Shrewsbury
(17) Bristol City v Bury
(18) Burnley v Millwall
(19) Chesterfield v Gillingham
(20) Peterborough v Bournemouth
(21) Preston v Plymouth
(22) Rotherham v Luton
(—) Stockport v Bristol Rovers
(23) Watford v *Crewe*
(24) Wrexham v Walsall
(25) Wycombe v Blackpool
(26) York v Notts County

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bury	38	20	10	8	56	34	70
Brentford	39	18	13	8	54	36	67
Luton	38	18	11	9	62	41	65
Stockport	36	17	11	8	50	36	62
Crewe	39	19	5	15	49	42	62
Watford	38	15	17	6	39	27	62
Burnley	40	17	9	14	62	44	60
Millwall	40	16	12	12	50	48	60
Bristol City	40	16	10	14	58	47	58
Walsall	39	16	10	13	47	42	58
Blackpool	39	14	14	11	50	40	56
Wrexham	38	13	17	8	43	41	56
Bournemth	41	14	12	15	37	38	54
Chestrfld	37	14	12	11	34	32	54
Gillingham	39	15	8	16	47	52	53
Preston	41	15	6	20	43	52	51
Bristol R	40	13	11	16	42	43	50
Plymouth	39	11	14	14	42	52	47
Shrwsbury	41	11	12	18	49	67	45
York	39	11	12	16	41	56	45
Wycombe	39	11	8	20	39	52	41
Peterboro	40	8	14	18	49	69	38
Rotherham	40	6	13	21	34	59	31
Notts Co	40	5	13	22	27	52	28

Third division

(27) Barnet v Hull
(28) Cardiff v Cambridge Utd
(29) Carlisle v Fulham
(30) Chester v Wigan
(31) Darlington v Doncaster
(32) Exeter v Torquay
(33) Hartlepool v Leyton Orient
(34) Hereford v Colchester
(35) Lincoln v Swansea
(36) Northampton v Scarborough
(37) Rochdale v Mansfield
(38) Scunthorpe v Brighton

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wigan	41	23	8	10	77	49	77
Carlisle	40	22	11	7	60	36	77
Fulham	40	22	10	8	67	36	76
Swansea	41	20	7	14	56	46	67
Chester	41	16	15	10	48	39	63
Cardiff	39	18	6	15	48	48	60
Scarboro	41	15	14	12	62	63	59
Cambs Utd	40	17	8	15	50	54	59
Northmptn	40	16	10	14	60	43	58
Colchester	40	14	16	10	53	45	58
Lincoln	41	15	11	15	59	64	56
Mansfield	40	14	14	12	42	39	56
Scunthrpe	39	16	6	17	54	58	54
Hull	40	12	17	11	38	39	53
Rochdale	41	11	16	14	49	54	49
L Orient	41	12	12	17	42	50	48
Torquay	41	13	9	19	42	53	48
Barnet	40	11	15	14	37	40	48
Darlington	40	12	10	18	58	67	46
Exeter	41	12	10	19	42	58	46
Doncaster	40	12	8	20	43	59	44
Hereford	41	10	11	20	45	60	41
Hartlpool	41	11	8	22	42	80	41
†Brighton	41	11	8	22	49	67	39

†Brighton deducted two points

Vauxhall Conference

(—) Bromsgrove v Hednesford
(—) Dover v Morecambe
(—) Gateshead v Farnborough
(—) *Hayes v Northwich*
(—) Macclesfield v Altrincham
(—) Rushden & Diamonds v Southport
(—) Slough v Halifax
(—) *Stalybridge* v Bath

FA Umbro Trophy

Semi-final, first leg
Dag and Red v Gloucester
* Woking v Stevenage

COURAGE COMBINED COUNTIES: Premier division: Ashford v Reading Town; Ash v Godalming and Guildford; Chipstead v Corinthian-Casuals; Cobham v Westfield; Cove v Cranleigh; Hartley Wintney v Feltham; Raynes Park Vale v Bedfont; Viking Sports v Sandhurst; Walton Casuals v Netherne

SOUTHERN AMATEUR LEAGUE: First division: Civil Service v O Parmiterians; Crouch End Vampires v South Bank; Norsemen v Polytechnic; O Actonians v Carshalton; West Wickham v East Barnet OG

Bell's Scottish League

Premier division

(39) Aberdeen v Motherwell
(40) Hibernian v Dundee Utd
(41) Kilmarnock v Hearts
(42) Raith v Celtic
(43) Rangers v Dunfermline

First division

(44) Airdrie v Clydebank
(45) Dundee v Falkirk
(46) East Fife v Partick
(47) Greenock Morton v St Johnstone
(48) Stirling v St Mirren

Second division

(49) Brechin v Queen Of South
(—) Dumbarton v Hamilton
(—) Livingston v Ayr
(—) Stenhousemuir v Clyde
(—) Stranraer v Berwick

Third division

(—) *Albion v Ross County*
(—) East Stirling v Cowdenbeath
(—) Forfar v Alloa
(—) Inverness CT v Montrose
(—) Queen's Park v Arbroath

UNIBOND LEAGUE: Premier division: Accrington Stanley v Buxton; Barrow v Colwyn Bay; Boston v Marine; Emley v Blyth Spartans; Frickley v Bamber Bridge; Gainsborough v Winsford; Hyde v Spennymoor; Knowsley v Guiseley; Lancaster v Runcorn; Leek v Bishop Auckland; Witton v Chorley. First division: Bradford Pk Ave v Workington; Congleton v Ashton United; Curzon Ashton v Worksop; Eastwood Town v Atherton L R; Great Harwood v Lincoln United; Leigh v Flixton; Matlock Town v Gretna; Netherfield v Harrogate Town; Stocksbridge PS v Farsley Celtic; Whitley Bay v Radcliffe.

GILBERT LEAGUE OF WALES: Bangor City v Holywell; Barry v Newtown; Briton Ferry v Aberystwyth; Caernarfon v Inter Cable-Tel (2.30); Carmarthen Town v Connah's Quay; Cemaes Bay v Ton Pentre; Cwmbran v Rhyl; Flint Town v Llansantffraid; Porthmadog v Caersws; Welshpool v Ebbw Vale (2.30)

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE: Premier division: Barnstaple v Odd Down; Bristol Manor Farm v Backwell; Chippenham v Bridport; Mangotsfield v Bideford; Paulton R v Brislington; Taunton v Bridgwater; Tiverton v Calne

ICIS LEAGUE: Premier division: Aylesbury v Purfleet; Boreham Wood v Enfield; Bromley v Heybridge; Carshalton v Hendon; Grays v Dulwich; Harrow v St Albans; Hitchin v Reading; Kingstonian v Oxford City; Staines v Sutton United; Yeovil v Bishop's Stortford. First division: Basingstoke v Billericay; Berkhamsted v Walton and Hersham; Canvey Island v Whyteleafe; Croydon v Abingdon Town; Maidenhead United v Uxbridge; Marlow v Barton Rovers; Molesey v Chesham; Thame v Bognor Regis; Tooting and Mitcham v Aldershot Town; Wokingham v Leyton Pennant; Worthing v Hampton. Second division: Banstead v Edgware; Barking v H Hempstead; Bedford T v Horsham; Bracknell v Ware; Chalfont St Peter v Witham; Collier Row and Romford v Leighton Town; Dorking v Tilbury; Metropolitan Police v Hungerford; Wembley v Egham; Windsor and Eton v Leatherhead; Wivenhoe v Cheshunt. Third division: Aveley v Braintree; East Thurrock v Northwood; Flackwell Heath v Tring; Hertford v Camberley; Hornchurch v Kingsbury; Lewes v Clapton; Wealdstone v Harlow; Wingate and Finchley v Epsom and Ewell

MINERVA SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE: Premier division: Biggleswade v Potters Bar; Brache Sparta v Langford; Hoddesdon v Arlesey; Letchworth v Bedford; London Colney v Buckingham Athletic; Milton Keynes v Harpenden; Toddington v Welwyn Garden

JEWSON EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Bury Town v Lowestoft; Felixstowe P and T v Wisbech; Great Yarmouth v March; Soham v Woodbridge Town; Tiptree v Diss; Warboys v Harwich and Parkeston; Wroxham v Stowmarket.

JEWSON WESSEX LEAGUE: First division: Lymington v Totton; Andover v Gosport; B A T v Downton; Bemerton Heath v Whitchurch; Christchurch v Aerostructures; Cowes Sports v Bournemouth; Eastleigh v Brockenhurst; Portsmouth v Petersfield; Thatcham Town v East Cowes; Wimborne Town v Romsey

UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE: First division: Burgess Hill v Portfield; Eastbourne Town v Southwick; Horsham Y M C A v Hassocks; Langney Sports v Selsey; Mile Oak v Oakwood; Pagham v Peacehaven and Telscombe; Ringmer v Arundel; Saltdean v Wick; Shoreham v Hailsham; Three Bridges v Whitehawk.

FA WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE: National division: Everton v Wembley (at Goodison Park, noon)

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE: First division: Canterbury v Lordswood; Chatham v Slade Green; Cray v Ramsgate; Crockenhill v Thamesmead; Greenwich v Folkestone Invicta; Herne Bay v Sheppey; Hythe v Deal; Tunbridge Wells v Furness; Whitstable Town v Corinthian; Woolwich v Beckenham

HELLENIC LEAGUE: Premier division: Burnham v Fairford; Endsleigh v Bicester; Lambourn v Abingdon United; North Leigh v Kintbury; Swindon Supermarine v Banbury; Tuffley v Almondsbury; Wantage v Brackley.

UHLSPORT UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Bourne v Potton; Cogenhoe v Boston; Desborough v Eynesbury; Holbeach v Long Buckby; Newport Pagnell v Stotfold; N Spencer v Kempston; Spalding v Wootton; S and L Corby v St Neots; Wellingborough v Stamford

INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE: Blakenhall v Pershore T; Bridgnorth v Halesowen H; Chasetown v Bloxwich Town; Hinckley Athletic v Stapenhill; Knypersley V v Barwell; Rocester v Rushall O; Shifnal T v Sandwell; Stratford T v Boldmere St M; W Mid Police v Oldbury U; Willenhall v Pelsall V.

ENDSLEIGH MIDLAND COMBINATION: Premier division: Alvechurch v Handrahan Timbers; Bolehall S v Wellesbourne; Coventry Sphinx v Coleshill; David Lloyd v West Midland Fire Service; Highgate v Worcester C; Kenilworth v Shirley; Massey Ferguson v Kings Heath; Southam v Knowle; Studley BKL v Meir KA

BANKS'S BREWERY LEAGUE: Premier division: Bloxwich S v Tividale; Brierley Hill T v Lye Town; Darlaston v Malvern T; Hill Top R v Westfields; Stourport S v Ludlow T; Wolverhampton C v Walsall Wood; Wednesfield v Cradley Town

NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE: Premier division: Armthorpe Welfare v Belper Town; Arnold v Pontefract Cols; Brigg Town v Sheffield; Hallam v Pickering; Hatfield Main v Selby; Liversedge v Hucknall Town; Maltby M W v Denaby; North Ferriby v Glasshoughton Welfare; Ossett Albion v Thackley; Ossett Town v Ashfield

NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE: First division: Burscough v Trafford; Chadderton v Nantwich Town; Clitheroe v Holker Old Boys; Kidsgrove v Eastwood H; Mossley v Blackpool Rovers; Penrith v Vauxhall G M; Rossendale v Newcastle Town; St Helens v Glossop North End; Salford v Atherton Coll

AFA SENIOR CUP: Final: Civil Service v Lensbury.

FEDERATION BREWERY NORTHERN LEAGUE: First division: Bedlington Terriers v Easington; Chester-le-Street v Crook; Consett v Morpeth; Dunston Federation v R T M Newcastle; Guisborough v Shildon; Murton v South Shields; Tow Law v Billingham; West Auckland v Durham; Whitby v Whickham

SMIRNOFF IRISH LEAGUE: Premier division: Cliftonville v Linfield; Coleraine v Portadown; Glenavon v Ards; Glentoran v Crusaders. First division: Ballyclare v Newry; Bangor v Distillery; Larne v Ballymena; Omagh v Carrick.

PRESS & JOURNAL HIGHLAND LEAGUE: Deveronvale v Forres Mechanics; Elgin v Wick Academy; Keith v Fraserburgh; Lossiemouth v Cove; Nairn County v Huntly; Peterhead v Brora; Rothes v Fort William

SOUTH EAST COUNTIES: First division: Charlton Athletic v West Ham (11.0); Millwall v Leyton Orient (11.0); Portsmouth v Cambridge United (11.0); Queens Park Rangers v Fulham (11.0); Tottenham v Norwich City (11.0); Watford v Chelsea (11.0). Second division: Barnet v Oxford United (11.0); Bournemouth v Tottenham (11.0); Brentford v Southampton (11.0); Brighton v Luton Town (11.0); Bristol City v Colchester United (noon); Bristol Rovers v Reading (11.0); Crystal Palace v Wimbledon (11.0)

OLD BOYS LEAGUE: Premier division: Clapham O X v Glyn O B; Latymer O B v Old Hamptonians; Old Meadonians v Old Aloysians; Old Vaughanians v Old Tenisonians

ARTHURIAN LEAGUE: Arthur Dunn Cup: Final: Foresters v Salopians. Premier division: Brentwoods v Chigwellians; Cholmeleians v Reptonians; Lancing v Wykehamists

HOCKEY

IRISH CUP: Semi-finals: Lisnagarvey v Banbridge (at Blaris, 2.30); Railway Union v Pembroke W (at Park Ave, 1.30)

CLUB MATCHES: Bath Buccs v Marlborough; Bracknell v Wokingham; Bournemouth v Fareham; Cardiff v Newport; Chichester v Mid-Sussex; Dereham v Peterboro T; High Wycombe v Marlow; Lansdown v Robinsons; Old Walcountians v Woking; Tunbridge Wells v Beckenham; Whitchurch v Westbury.

WOMEN'S NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier division: Doncaster v Clifton (12.30); Ipswich v Slough (Tuddenham Rd, noon); Sutton CL v Leicester (11.30); Trojans v Hightown (1.30). First division: Bedans v Bradford (12.30); Bracknell v Canterbury (2.0); Chelmsford v Blueharts (11.30); Wimbledon v Olton (noon). Second division: Exmouth v Sherwood (1.30); Old Loughtonians v Loughborough Students (1.0); St Albans v Ealing (1.30); West Witney v Woking (noon)

EAST LEAGUE: Bexleyheath v WGC; Bury v Sevenoaks; Cambs C v Ashford; Harleston v Ipswich

MIDLANDS LEAGUE: Crimson R v Kettering; Hampton v Aldridge; Pickwick v N Staffs; W Brom v Leicester.

NORTH LEAGUE: Blackburn v Welton; Liverpool v Carlisle; Poynton v Sheffield; York v Chester

SOUTH LEAGUE: City of Portsmouth v Hampstead; Reading v Horsham; Soton v Winchester; Win Hill v Dulwich; Worthing v Tulse Hill

OTHER SPORT

BASKETBALL: Budweiser League: Derby v Sheffield (7.30); Leicester v Birmingham (7.30); Hemel and Watford v Manchester (7.30); Worthing v Chester (8.0)

BOWLS: Men's British championships (at Melton Mowbray)

GOLF: Scottish champion of champions (at Leven Links).

SNOOKER: British Open (at Plymouth Pavilions)

SPEEDWAY: Speedway Star Cup: Bradford v Coventry (7.30); Swindon v Wolverhampton (7.30). British under-21 championship: Semi-final (at Berwick, 7.0). Premier League Knock Out Cup: Stoke v Sheffield (7.30)

SQUASH: British Open (at Cardiff)

TENNIS: Davis Cup: Euro-Africa zone: Group one: Second round: Great Britain v Zimbabwe (at Crystal Palace).

VOLLEYBALL: National Cup finals: Men: Stoke v Tooting. Boys': Under-16: Haughton v Wessex. Women: London v Salford. Girls': Under-16: Purbrook v Tameside (at Pond's Forge, Sheffield, 10.30)

RUGBY UNION

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

Courage Clubs Championship

First division

Bristol v Northampton
Gloucester v Saracens
Leicester v Orrell
London Irish v Harlequins
West Hartlepool v Sale

Second division

Bedford v Newcastle (2.15)
Coventry v Rotherham
Moseley v London Scottish
Nottingham v Waterloo
Richmond v Blackheath
Wakefield v Rugby

Third division

Exeter v Fylde
Harrogate v Clifton
Leeds v Morley
London Welsh v Redruth
Lydney v Walsall
Reading v Otley
Rosslyn Park v Liverpool St Helens
Wharfedale v Havant

Fourth division north

Aspatria v Manchester
Hereford v Worcester
Nuneaton v Stourbridge
Preston Grasshoppers v Lichfield
Sandal v Birmingham/Solihull
Sheffield v Stoke-on-Trent
Winnington Park v Kendal

Fourth division south

Askeans v Charlton Park
Camberley v Plymouth
Cheltenham v Berry Hill
Henley v Metropolitan Police
North Walsham v High Wycombe
Tabard v Newbury
Weston-super-Mare v Barking

SOUTH WEST: First division: Barnstaple v Brixham; Bridgwater v Camborne; Gloucester OB v Torquay; Maidenhead v Salisbury; St Ives v Matson; Stroud v Launceston.

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST: First division: Esher v Old Colfeians; Guildford and Godalming v Thurrock; Norwich v Harlow; Ruislip v Old Mid-Whitgiftians; Southend v Basingstoke; Staines v Sutton and Croydon; Sudbury v Wimbledon

MIDLANDS: First division: Barkers Butts v Whitchurch; Belgrave v Westleigh; Broad Street v Syston; Burton v Stockwood Park; Camp Hill v Stafford; Derby v Scunthorpe; *Hinckley v Mansfield*; Leamington v Leighton Buzzard

NORTH: First division: Broughton Park v Hull Ionians; Macclesfield v Bridlington; New Brighton v Widnes; Stockton v Bradford and Bingley; Tynedale v Sedgley Park; Wigton v West Park Bramhope

TENNENTS 1556 BOWL: Second round: Lochaber v Biggar

Welsh League

First division

Caerphilly v Newbridge (2.30)
Cardiff v Neath (2.30)
Llanelli v Dunvant (2.30)
Newport v Bridgend (2.30)
Pontypridd v Treorchy (2.30)
Swansea v Ebbw Vale (2.30)

Second division

Aberavon v Maesteg (2.30)
Abercynon v Abertillery (2.30)
Blackwood v Pontypool (2.30)
Llandovery v Cross Keys (2.30)
Ystradgynlais v SW Police (2.30)

THIRD DIVISION: Llanharan v Kenfig Hill; Merthyr v Penarth; Tenby Utd v Tondu

INSURANCE CORPORATION LEAGUE: First division: Ballymena v Old Belvedere (2.30); Cork Constitution v Dungannon (2.30); Garryowen v Old Wesley (2.30); Instonians v Young Munster (2.30); Lansdowne v Blackrock College (2.30); Shannon v Old Crescent (2.30); St Mary's College v Terenure College (2.30). Second division: Bective Rangers v Clontarf (2.30); Dolphin v Greystones (2.30); Highfield v Derry (2.30); Monkstown v Malone (2.30); NIFC v DLSP (2.30); Skerries v Wanderers (2.30); UCC v Sunday's Well (2.30)

RUGBY LEAGUE

Stones Super League

Paris Saint-Germain v St Helens (7.0)

NATIONAL CONFERENCE LEAGUE (2.30): Premier division: Beverley v Mayfield; Lock Lane v Heworth; West Hull v Saddleworth; Woolston v Oldham St Annes. First division: Barrow Island v Thornhill; East Leeds v Eastmoor; Millom v Oulton; Walney Central v Blackbrook; Wigan St Judes v Leigh East. Second division: New Earswick v Hull Dockers; Ovenden v Featherstone Amateur

BNFL NATIONAL CUP: Quarter-finals: Clayton v Askam; Dudley Hill v Milford; Ellenborough Rgrs v Wigan St Pats; Normanton v Siddal.

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

FA Carling Premiership

Liverpool v Coventry

Coca-Cola Cup

Final

Leicester v Middlesbrough
(at Wembley)

FAI HARP LAGER NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier division: Home Farm v UCD (3.15); St Patrick's Ath v Finn Harps (2.0)

FA WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE: National division: Croydon v Arsenal (at Croydon Sports Arena, 2.0); Ilkeston Town v Tranmere Rovers (at New Manor Ground, 2.0); Liverpool v Doncaster (at Kirkby Sports Stadium, noon); Millwall v Southampton (at Fisher FC, 2.0)

RUGBY LEAGUE

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

Stones Super League

Bradford v London (6.0)
Halifax v Salford
Sheffield v Castleford (6.35)
Warrington v Oldham

First division

Huddersfield v Featherstone (3.30)
Hull v Wakefield (3.15)
Keighley v Whitehaven
Widnes v Hull K R
Workington v Dewsbury

Second division

Batley v Barrow (3.15)
Carlisle v Hunslet
Doncaster v Lancashire Lynx
Prescot v Leigh
Rochdale v Bramley

RUGBY UNION

Kick-off 3.0 unless stated

Courage Clubs Championship

First division

Wasps v Bath
(at Loftus Road)

Tennents 1556 Cup

Fifth round

Boroughmuir v Stirling County
Dundee HSFP v Hawick Linden
Edinburgh Univ v Kirkcaldy
Gala v Watsonians
Glasgow Southern v West of Scotland
Heriot's FP v Berwick
Melrose v Kelso
Peebles v Kilmarnock

TENNENTS 1556 BOWL: Second round: Cartha Q P v Hillhead/Jordanhill; Duns v Linlithgow; East Kilbride v Selkirk; Grangemouth v Dunfermline; Livingston v Preston Lodge; Lochaber v Biggar; Morgan Acad FP v Trinity Acads; Ross High v Strathendrick.

TENNENTS 1556 SHIELD: First round: Aberdeen GSFP v Hamilton Acads; Corstorphine v Glasgow HK; Glenrothes v Glasgow Acads; Hawick v Stewarts Mel FP; Hawick Trades v Currie; Jed-Forest v Ayr; Musselburgh v Edinburgh Acads; St Boswells v Stewartry

HOCKEY

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Premier division: Fartown Tigers v East Grinstead (at Holyhead Leisure Centre, 2.30); Guildford v Havant (at Kings Manor School, noon); Old Loughtonians v Southgate (at Chigwell, 1.30); Reading v Cannock (at Sonning Lane, 2.0); Surbiton v Hounslow (at Sugden Road, 2.30); Teddington v Canterbury (at Dukes Meadows, Chiswick, 2.0). First division: Beeston v Blueharts (at Highfields, Nottingham, 2.0); Hull v Warrington (at Hull University, 2.0); Indian Gymkhana v Bournville (at Thornbury Avenue, 2.30); Isca v Bromley (at Exeter School, 1.30); Lewes v Brooklands (at Southdown Club, 1.30); Oxford Hawks v City of Portsmouth (at Banbury Road, 12.30); Oxford University v Crosticks (at Gypsy Lane Headington, 1.0); Sheffield v Doncaster (at Abbeydale Park, 2.0); St Albans v Firebrands (at Clarence Park, 2.0); Stourport v Gloucester City (at Kidderminster School, 2.30); Trojans v Harleston Magpies (at Stoneham Lane, Eastleigh 1.30)

AEWHA CUP: Quarter-finals: Clifton v Canterbury (1.0); Doncaster v Sutton (1.0); Hightown v Aldridge (12.30); Slough v Ipswich (2.0)

AEWHA PLATE: Quarter-finals: Chiltern v Camberley; Deeside R v Poynton; St Ives v Leominster; Sevenoaks v Driffield.

OTHER SPORT

BASKETBALL: Basketball League: Sheffield v *Leicester* (6.30); Birmingham v Worthing (6.30); London v Newcastle (6.30); Thames Valley v Hemel and Watford (6.00)

BOWLS: Men's British championships (at Melton Mowbray)

CYCLING: "Cycling Weekly" international grand prix (106 miles, Beaconsfield, 11.0am).

GOLF: Scottish champion of champions (at Leven Links)

LACROSSE: Daily Telegraph Senior Flags: Final. Mellor v Heaton Mersey (at Didsbury Cricket Club)

MOTOR RACING: British F3 championship (at Silverstone)

SNOOKER: British Open (at Plymouth Pavilions)

SQUASH: British Open (at Cardiff).

TENNIS: *Davis Cup: Euro-Africa zone:* Group one: Second round: Great Britain v Zimbabwe (at Crystal Palace).

VOLLEYBALL: National Cup finals: Men: EVA Trophy: Danes v Tonbridge. Under-18: Tendring v Wessex. Women: EVA Trophy: Queensway v Purbrook. Under-18: Wessex v Tameside (at Pond's Forge, Sheffield, 10.0).

3 EXPLOSIVE GAMES AT TWICKENHAM!

WILLIS CORROON INTER SERVICE RUGBY CHAMPIONSHIP

ROYAL NAVY v ARMY
Saturday 12 April 1997. Kick-off 3pm
12.30pm U-21 match
England Students v Combined Services

ARMY v ROYAL AIR FORCE
Wednesday 16 April 1997. Kick-off 3pm
12.30pm match
Portsmouth Grammar School
v King's School, Bruton

ROYAL AIR FORCE v ROYAL NAVY
Wednesday 23 April 1997. Kick-off 3pm
12.30pm match
Sussex v Hampshire Schools "U-12s"

Adults £10 (Juniors half-price) Family £20
(2 adults & 2 children) School Parties £1 per person

Tickets from Credit Card Hotline
01705 865575 or at the gate

THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE PREMIERSHIP THIS WEEKEND

ARSENAL

Arsenal must hope David Seaman, shaky on his recent return against Liverpool, will find his true form. Midfield remains Arsenal's problem, the more so with the loss of Paul Merson. David Platt has still to show his old form, Steve Hughes is still maturing, and too much depends on Patrick Vieira. Tony Adams, the captain, will miss the match because of an ankle injury, but Nicolas Anelka, 18, will at last make his debut after his transfer from Paris Saint-Germain. **BG**

ASTON VILLA

Bookmakers rarely get it wrong, but Villa supporters had a good old chuckle recently when they examined the betting slip for the game against Blackburn Rovers at Ewood Park. In the "Who will score the first goal?" section, Neil Davis was rated as co-second favourite of four at 8-1. Now Davis, 23, might be a promising striker, but he made only three appearances for Villa, as a substitute, last season and has sat on the bench once, without playing, this season. Get real, Ladbrokes. **RK**

BLACKBURN ROVERS

Has there ever been a longer running saga in football than the managerial situation at Blackburn? Roy Hodgson, the manager in waiting, will not now join until a month before the new season starts, according to reports from Italy. The Internazionale manager was hoping for an early release, but the Italian club wants him to stay on until the end of June. Rovers have no injury worries as they search, on Monday, for the win against Leeds that should ensure Premiership survival. **DM**

CHELSEA

Chelsea seem as erratic as ever, so much stronger at home than away, but, over the years, they have always been a problem for Arsenal.. As usual, Gianfranco Zola surely holds the key. Arsenal may try to subdue him by using Martin Keown in the man-marking role to which he is well used. However, with John Hartson no longer a part of Arsenal's attack, it should mean that Chelsea's defence is less embarrassed than usual in the air. Especially if Frank Leboeuf is fit again. **BG**

COVENTRY CITY

It is rare that clubs gang up on one of their own, but the decision to dismiss Middlesbrough's appeal against their three-point deduction was unanimously welcomed by the Premiership bretheren. None more so than Coventry, whose precarious position would have become dire had Middlesbrough been successful. "If that had happened, every club in the land would be looking to postpone games whenever they ran into injury problems," Liam Daish, the Coventry captain, observed. **RK**

DERBY COUNTY

Mart Poom, the Estonia goalkeeper, makes his debut today and he could be joined by Wanchope, a striker from Costa Rica. Regulations dictate that only three players from outside the European Commmunity can play, but an injury to Stimac, sustained in Croatia's World Cup qualifying match in Slovenia, allows Wanchope to feature alongside Poom and Asanovic. *Poom supported United as a* child when he watched games relayed to Tallinn on Finnish television. **RH**

EVERTON

Dave Watson is having a baptism of fire as Everton's caretaker player-manager, with Hinchcliffe and Grant out for the season, Barrett and Barmby missing today and Short and Branch facing late fitness tests. "Picking my first team won't be difficult," Watson said, "because we've only got about 12 to select from." And one of them, Phelan, spent 14 hours travelling *home from Macedonia with Ireland on* Thursday. Watson has made one decisive change, however: Southall returns. **PB**

LEEDS UNITED

Even with two new signings, Derek Lilley and Pierre Laurent, George Graham is still looking to expand his squad, but he denied an offer for Alan Mahon, Tranmere's midfield player. Palmer and Molenaar are suspended, while Radebe and Yeboah are on international duty. Ian Rush, meanwhile, continues out of position, wide on the right. "I'm happy just to be in the team," *he said, "but I don't want* to be playing there next season. I still think my best position is as a forward." **PB**

LEICESTER CITY

Residents of Vallance Road, in the East End of London, will probably be cheering on Muzzy Izzet, the Leicester City midfield player, in the Coca-Cola Cup final. The street is remembered as the address of the Kray twins, but Izzet hopes to add to its fame, having lived there as a child. "I found out about Ronnie and Reggie when I was nine and to be honest I was quite excited. At *that age you like the idea of real-life* gangsters," Izzet said. "It was a really nice area — not like the film." **RH**

LIVERPOOL

Four games in nine days, including Everton, Manchester United and a Cup Winners' Cup semi-final, will probably shape Liverpool's season. Roy Evans, the manager, watched Steve McManaman limp out of training yesterday with a thigh problem. McManaman will have treatment in the hope of playing against Coventry tomorrow, but Evans is left rueing the fact that he did *not* withdraw the midfield player from the England squad when he suffered the same problem last week. **DM**

MANCHESTER UNITED

"There's a lot of excitement about the place at the moment," Alex Ferguson said yesterday. "Being the holiday period, kids are at the training ground, we've had thousands at the ground this week, and it adds to the buzz about the place." They saw *Gary Pallister and David Beckham,* who both missed the England match last week, back in training and who return against Derby. Gary Neville and David May, who was a late addition to the England squad, are both doubtful. **PB**

MIDDLESBROUGH

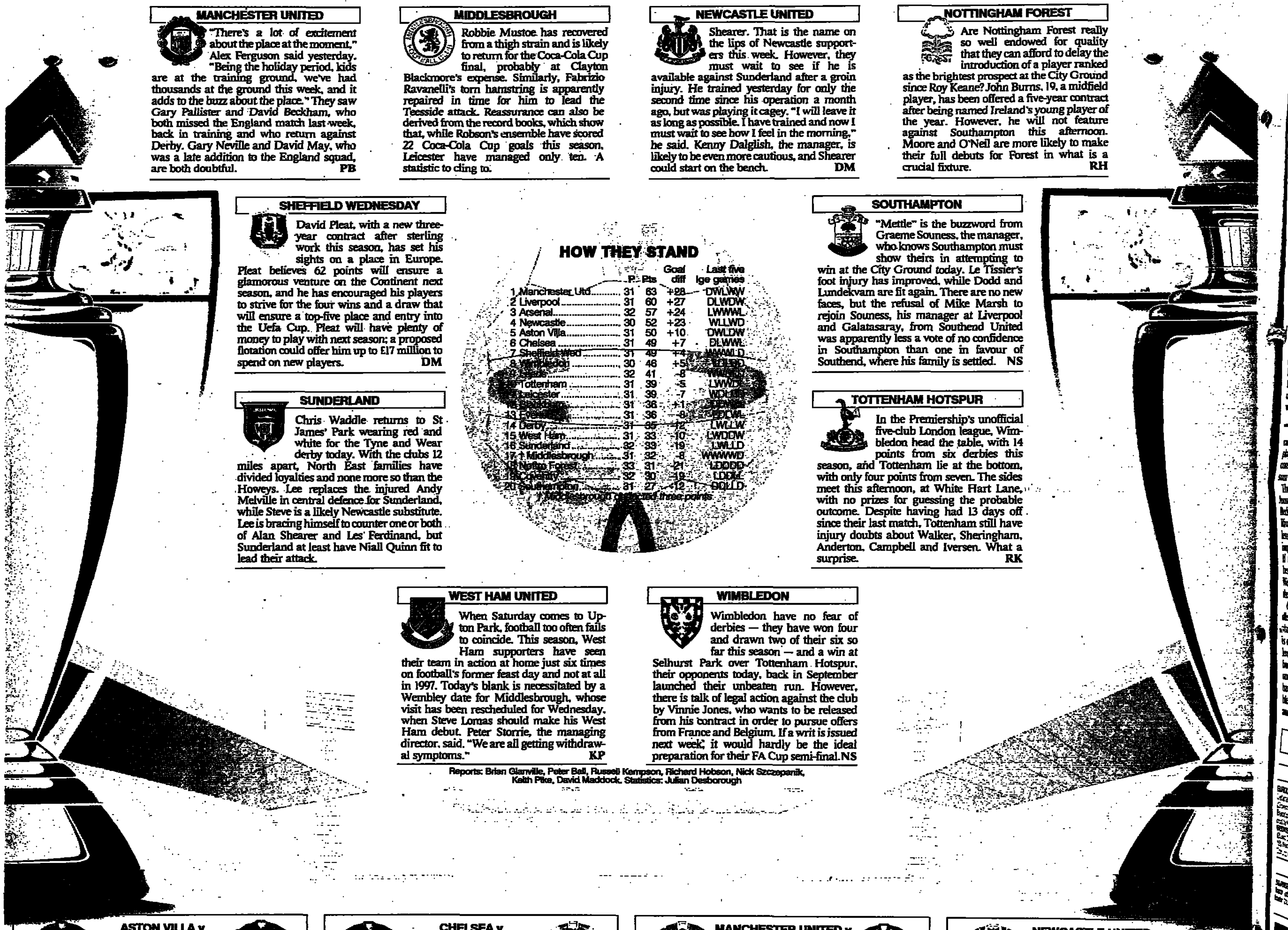
Robbie Mustoe has recovered from a thigh strain and is likely to return for the Coca-Cola Cup final, probably at Clayton Blackmore's expense. Similarly, Fabrizio Ravanelli's torn hamstring is apparently repaired in time for him to lead the Teesside attack. Reassurance can also be derived from the record books, which show that, while Robson's ensemble have scored 22 Coca-Cola Cup goals this season, Leicester have managed only ten. A statistic to cling to.

NEWCASTLE UNITED

Shearer. That is the name on the lips of Newcastle supporters this week. However, they must wait to see if he is available against Sunderland after a groin injury. He trained yesterday for only the second time since his operation a month ago, but was playing it cagey. "I will leave it as long as possible. I have trained and now I must wait to see how I feel in the morning," he said. Kenny Dalglish, the manager, is likely to be even more cautious, and Shearer could start on the bench. **DM**

NOTTINGHAM FOREST

Are Nottingham Forest really so well endowed for quality that they can afford to delay the introduction of a player ranked as the brightest prospect at the City Ground since Roy Keane? John Burns, 19, a midfield player, has been offered a five-year contract after being named Ireland's young player of the year. However, he will not feature against Southampton this afternoon. Moore and O'Neil are more likely to make their full debuts for Forest in what is a crucial fixture. **RH**



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY

David Pleat, with a new three-year contract after sterling work this season, has set his sights on a place in Europe. Pleat believes 62 points will ensure a glamorous venture on the Continent next season, and he has encouraged his players to strive for the four wins and a draw that will ensure a top-five place and entry into the Uefa Cup. Pleat will have plenty of money to play with next season; a proposed flotation could offer him up to £17 million to spend on new players. **DM**

SOUTHAMPTON

"Mettle" is the buzzword from Graeme Souness, the manager, who knows Southampton must show theirs in attempting to win at the City Ground today. Le Tissier's foot injury has improved, while Dodd and Lundekvam are fit again. There are no new faces, but the refusal of Mike Marsh to rejoin Souness, his manager at Liverpool and Galatasaray, from Southend United was apparently less a vote of no confidence in Southampton than one in favour of Southend, where his family is settled. **NS**

SUNDERLAND

Chris Waddle returns to St James' Park wearing red and white for the Tyne and Wear derby today. With the clubs 12 miles apart, North East families have divided loyalties and none more so than the Howeys. Lee replaces the injured Andy Melville in central defence for Sunderland, while Steve is a likely Newcastle substitute. Lee is bracing himself to counter one or both of Alan Shearer and Les Ferdinand, but Sunderland at least have Niall Quinn fit to lead their attack.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

In the Premiership's unofficial five-club London league, Wimbledon head the table, with 14 points from six derbies this season, and Tottenham lie at the bottom, with only four points from seven. The sides meet this afternoon, at White Hart Lane, with no prizes for guessing the probable outcome. Despite having had 13 days off since their last match, Tottenham still have injury doubts about Walker, Sheringham, Anderton, Campbell and Iversen. What a surprise. **RK**

HOW THEY STAND

	P	Pts	Goal diff	Last five lge games
1 Manchester Utd	31	63	+28	DWLWW
2 Liverpool	31	60	+27	DLWDW
3 Arsenal	32	57	+24	LWWWL
4 Newcastle	30	52	+23	WLLWD
5 Aston Villa	31	50	+10	DWLDW
6 Chelsea	31	49	+7	DLWWL
7 Sheffield Wed	31	49	+4	WWWLD
8 Wimbledon	30	46	+5	[illegible]
9 Leeds	32	41	-8	[illegible]
10 Tottenham	31	39	-5	[illegible]
11 Leicester	31	39	-7	[illegible]
12 Blackburn	31	36	+1	[illegible]
13 Everton	31	36	-8	[illegible]
14 Derby	31	35	-12	LWLLW
15 West Ham	31	33	-10	LWDDW
16 Sunderland	32	33	-19	LWLLD
17 † Middlesbrough	31	32	-8	WWWWD
18 Nottm Forest	33	31	-21	LDDDD
19 Coventry	32	30	-19	[illegible]
20 Southampton	31	27	-12	DDLLD

† Middlesbrough deducted three points

WEST HAM UNITED

When Saturday comes to Upton Park, football too often fails to coincide. This season, West Ham supporters have seen their team in action at home just six times on football's former feast day and not at all in 1997. Today's blank is necessitated by a Wembley date for Middlesbrough, whose visit has been rescheduled for Wednesday, when Steve Lomas should make his West Ham debut. Peter Storrie, the managing director, said, "We are all getting withdrawal symptoms." **KP**

WIMBLEDON

Wimbledon have no fear of derbies — they have won four and drawn two of their six so far this season — and a win at Selhurst Park over Tottenham Hotspur, their opponents today, back in September launched their unbeaten run. However, there is talk of legal action against the club by Vinnie Jones, who wants to be released from his contract in order to pursue offers from France and Belgium. If a writ is issued next week, it would hardly be the ideal preparation for their FA Cup semi-final. **NS**

Reports: Brian Glanville, Peter Ball, Russell Kempson, Richard Hobson, Nick Szczepanik, Keith Pike, David Maddock. Statistics: Julian Desborough

ASTON VILLA v EVERTON

TICKETS: seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 0-1, —, 2-0, 6-2, 2-2, 0-0, 2-1, 0-0, 0-0, 1-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

ASTON VILLA (from): M Oakes, F Nelson, A Wright, U Ehiogu, S Staunton, G Southgate, M Draper, I Taylor, D Yorke, S Milosevic, J Joachim.

EVERTON (from): N Southall, T Phelan, D Watson, C Short, D *Unsworth*, R Dunne, G Speed, C Thomsen, J Parkinson, D Ferguson, G Stuart, P Rideout, M Hottiger, M Branch, M Ball, P Gerrard.

CHELSEA v ARSENAL

TICKETS: sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-0, 1-1, —, 0-0, 2-1, 1-1, 1-0, 0-2, 2-1, 1-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

CHELSEA (from): F Grodas, N Colgan, P Parker, D Granville, D Petrescu, F Leboeuf, E Johnsen, S Clarke, A Myers, E Newton, C Burley, S Minto, J Morris, M Nicholls, N Clement, G Vialli, P Hughes, G Zola.

ARSENAL (from): D Seaman, L Dixon, N Winterburn, S Bould, M Keown, D Platt, D Bergkamp, P Vieira, I Wright, S Hughes, N Anelka, P Shaw, R Parlour, S Marshall, R Garde, L Harper.

MANCHESTER UNITED v DERBY COUNTY

TICKETS: sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: —, 4-1, 0-2, 1-2, 3-1, —, —, —, —, —

HOW THEY LINE UP

MANCHESTER UTD (from): P Schmeichel, P Neville, D Irwin, D May, G Pallister, R Johnsen, D Beckham, R Keane, N Butt, E Cantona, R Giggs, O G Solskjaer, A Cole, G Neville, K Poborsky, P Scholes, B McClair, J Cruyff, R van der Gouw.

DERBY (from): *M Poom, J Laursen, C Powell, C Dailly, P McGrath, M* Carbon, P Trollope, R van der Laan, A Asanovic, A Ward, D Sturridge, P Simpson, D Powell, R Willems, P Wanchope, M Solis, R Hoult.

NEWCASTLE UNITED v SUNDERLAND

TICKETS: sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: —, —, —, 1-1, —, 1-0, 1-0, —, —, —

HOW THEY LINE UP

NEWCASTLE (from): S Hislop, S Watson, R Elliott, J Beresford, D Peacock, D Batty, W Barton, R Lee, D Ginola, K Gillespie, A Shearer, L Ferdinand, P Beardsley, F Asprilla, L Clark, D Hamilton, P Srnicek, S Howey.

SUNDERLAND (from): L Perez, G Hall, D Kubicki, G Ord, L Howey, R Johnston, K Ball, P Bracewell, M Gray, C Waddle, P Stewart, M Bridges, C Russell, N Quinn, D Kelly, J Eriksson, M Smith, C Woods, Agnew.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST v SOUTHAMPTON

TICKETS: seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 0-0, 3-3, 3-0, 2-0, 3-1, 1-3, 1-2, —, 3-0, 1-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

NOTTINGHAM FOREST (from): M Crossley, D Lyttle, S Pearce, C Cooper, S Chettle, A I Haaland, D Phillips, B O'Neil, S Gemmill, I Woan, D Saunders, P van Hooijdonk, C Allen, B Roy, I Moore, P McGregor, C *Bart-Williams, A Fettis.*

SOUTHAMPTON (from): M Taylor, U van Gobbel, J Dodd, R Dryden, C Lundekvam, A Neilson, N Maddison, J Magilton, E Berkovic, R Slater, M Oakley, M Le Tissier, E Ostenstad, S Basham, M Evans, F Benali, D Beasant.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR v WIMBLEDON

TICKETS: seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 1-2, 0-3, 3-2, 0-1, 4-2, 3-2, 1-1, 1-1, 1-2, 3-1

HOW THEY LINE UP

TOTTENHAM (from): I Walker, E Baardsen, D Austin, J Edinburgh, J Scales, C Calderwood, S Carr, S Campbell, A Sinton, A Nielsen, D Anderton, E Sheringham, R Rosenthal, J Dozzell, R Fox, N Fenn, R *Allen, S Nethercott.*

WIMBLEDON (from): N Sullivan, K Cunningham, A Kimble, V Jones, D Blackwell, O Leonhardsen, R Earle, E Ekoku, D Holdsworth, M Gayle, C Perry, J Goodman, B McAllister, N Ardley, S Castledine, M Harford, D Jupp, A Clarke, J Euell, P Fear, P Heald.

TOMORROW

LIVERPOOL v COVENTRY CITY

TICKETS: sold out

10-YEAR RECORD: 2-0, 4-0, 0-0, 0-1, 1-1, 1-0, 4-0, 1-0, 2-3, 0-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

LIVERPOOL (from): D James, J McAteer, B T Kvarme, S Harkness, M Wright, D Matteo, P Babb, N Ruddock, S I Bjornebye, M Thomas, J Redknapp, J Barnes, S McManaman, P Berger, R Fowler, S Collymore, *J Nielsen*, R Jones.

COVENTRY (from): S Ogrizovic, R Shaw, G Breen, D Dublin, P Williams, M Hall, D Burrows, K Richardson, G McAllister, P Ndlovu, N Whelan, D Huckerby, A Evtushok, E Jess, G Strachan, M O'Neill, A Ducros, J Filan.

LEADING SCORERS

20 A Shearer (Newcastle United). 19 I Wright (Arsenal). 16 R Fowler (Liverpool). 15 D Yorke (Aston Villa). 14 F Ravanelli (Middlesbrough). 13 O G Solskjaer (Manchester United); L Ferdinand (Newcastle United). 12 M Le Tissier (Southampton). 11 C Sutton (Blackburn Rovers); S Claridge (Leicester); S Collymore (Liverpool); E Ekoku (Wimbledon). 10 D Bergkamp (Arsenal); K Gallacher (Blackburn Rovers); D Dublin (Coventry City); Juninho (Middlesbrough).

CHAMPIONSHIP BETTING

1-3: Manchester United, 15-8: Liverpool, 33-1: Arsenal, Newcastle United, 100-1: Aston Villa, Chelsea, 150-1: Wimbledon, 250-1: Sheffield Wednesday. Odds supplied by Ladbrokes

The official internet site of the FA Carling Premiership is at http://www.fa-carling.com/

SUNDAY: COCA-COLA CUP FINAL

LEICESTER CITY v MIDDLESBROUGH

TICKETS: sold out

Previous Cup meeting: 0-1 (1975-5)

HOW THEY LINE UP

LEICESTER (from): K Keller, S Prior, S Walsh, J Watts, S Grayson, G Parker, *N Lennon, M Izzet, P Kaamark, E Heskey, S Claridge, K Poole,* M Whitlow, *S Taylor*, M Robins, J Lawrence,

MIDDLESBROUGH (from): M Schwarzer, N Cox, N Pearson, G Festa, C Blackmore, C Hignett, Emerson, R Mustoe, Juninho, F Ravanelli, M Beck, B Roberts, C Fleming, S Vickers, V Kinder.

MONDAY

LEEDS UNITED v BLACKBURN ROVERS

TICKETS: seats available

10-YEAR RECORD: 0-0, 2-2, 2-0, 1-1, —, —, 5-2, 3-3, 1-1, 0-0

HOW THEY LINE UP

LEEDS (from): N Martyn, G Kelly, A Dorigo, D Wetherall, G Halle, L Sharpe, *I Rush*, L Bowyer, *M Jackson*, M Ford, P Laurent, D Lilley, B Deane, R Wallace, I Harte, M Beeney.

BLACKBURN (from): T Flowers, J Kenna, G Le Saux, H Berg, C Hendry, G Flitcroft, W McKinley, C Sutton, K Gallacher, P Pedersen, N Marker, S Given, L Bohinen, G Donis, I Pearce, G Fenton.

WHEN TO WATCH ON TELEVISION

Today

11.00am Sky Sports 1 Ford Football Special Chelsea v Arsenal

10.55pm BBC1 Match of the day (highlights)

Tomorrow

3pm Sky Sports 3 Coca-Cola Cup final Leicester v Middlesbrough (live)

10.30pm Sky Sports 1 Coca-Cola Cup final Leicester v Middlesbrough (repeat)

11.00pm ITV The Match Leicester v Middlesbrough (highlights)

Monday

8pm Sky Sports Ford Escort Monday night football Leeds v Blackburn (live)

هكذا من الاصل

FOOTBALL

Leicester prepare Wembley ambush

By Peter Ball

AS Leicester City discovered in 1969, it is not unknown for a team to reach a cup final and be relegated in the same year, but Middlesbrough, Leicester's opponents at Wembley tomorrow in the Coca-Cola Cup final, could yet make such bittersweet achievements pale by comparison.

They play an FA Cup semi-final a week later, leaving open the possibility that, after failing to reach a significant final in 122 years, they could end the season with two cups in their trophy cabinet. They are also in some danger, albeit receding, of relegation. A schizophrenic season, by any criteria.

It is hard to imagine a greater contrast than with Martin O'Neill's wholly admirable Leicester, a side that plays to its maximum, a unit considerably greater than the sum of its parts.

The team of Ravanelli and Juninho, of Emerson and Beck, have illuminated the Riverside Stadium and, rather less regularly, some other imposing grounds this season. If they can reproduce their best moments tomorrow, then Wembley will be graced by their presence.

On some occasions Middlesbrough have looked a shambles, with a defence that *is one of the worst at the top* level in living memory, and in *front of them* a bickering, unco-ordinated crew. "We have had our teething troubles, but if we win two cups and stay up this season, I don't think I can be accused of putting a side together too quickly," Bryan Robson, the manager, said.

With the return to the basics of a back four, the signing of Nesta and Schwarzer and the reappearance of Nigel Pearson, they are a more compact, unified team, and the cup successes have begun to be carried over into the FA Carling Premiership.

Tomorrow the attention will focus on Juninho and Ravanelli, who could provide one of the more memorable finals but, even on the big day, with Juninho only just back from Brazil and Ravanelli still enigmatic about his future, the doubts cannot be put aside.

With Internazionale hovering, Middlesbrough *may need* to win a trophy — and avoid *relegation — to retain* Ravanelli. "It is so important *to play in Europe,*" *he said.* "When you are used to it, you *miss it.* But we must not only think about Europe. It would *be very bad* to get into Europe [by winning the Coca-Cola Cup] and be relegated at the same time."

Ravanelli stayed out of Italy's draw with Poland on Wednesday to protect a hamstring and ensure his fitness for tomorrow.

As important as the Italian will be tomorrow, the presence of Pearson will be vital if the treat of Heskey and Claridge is to be contained. Four years ago, as Sheffield Wednesday captain, a broken leg cost Pearson four Wem*bley appearances — a semi*-final, two finals and a replay — *in two months.*

His indomitable spirit will need to be reflected by his team, for Leicester demonstrated outstanding resilience and team spirit in their semi-final battle with Wimbledon (and, indeed, in their FA Cup matches with Chelsea). They might not have a Juninho but, in Parker and Lennon, they have a midfield to respect.

They also have Wembley experience. If their four FA Cup finals, all unsuccessful, are shrouded in the mists of time, most of their present team have played in four recent play-off finals. Last *year* Claridge's goal in the dying seconds capped an out*standing team* performance, combining irresistable det*ermination with some excel*lent passing. Middlesbrough beware.

FA hearing finds Stevenage guilty

Stevenage Borough, the *Vauxhall Conference champions,* have been fined £25,000 *by the Football Association* after Victor Green, their chairman, was found guilty of asking for a £30,000 incentive from Torquay United, the Nationwide League third division club, not to sell Barry Hayles, the Stevenage striker, last season. The sale could have led to Stevenage being overtaken by Woking, which would have meant relegation for Torquay. The fine has *been suspended for two years* but Stevenage have been *ordered to pay £10,000 to*wards the costs of the hearing.

Poacher and goalkeeper relish Coca-Cola Cup final confrontation

Australian rules the Middlesbrough roost

The imposing Schwarzer has helped to transform Middlesbrough's season

By David Maddock

STANDING outside the Riverside Stadium on a biting North East evening, two skinny boys huddle together, nervously waiting for a glimpse of Middlesbrough's latest foreign import. Striding into the night comes their quarry, and all uncertainty is dispersed.

Blond and, at 6ft 4in, imposing, it is easy to recognise Mark Schwarzer, even when the only previous glimpse of him has been from the back of a stand through Teesside drizzle. Then, when he talks, his blinkered confidence makes it even clearer that here is a member of that strange breed: the last line of defence.

"I am not mad, or at least I don't think of myself as being part of that mad fraternity of goalkeepers, but I am outspoken. I have got my opinions *and I give them,*" *he said* through a smile. "You have to possess that confidence and be a little eccentric to be a goalkeeper. *Maybe I am mad,* but then when I see players doing that tackling business . . . that's absolutely crazy."

*Another laugh and Schwar*zer delivers the most telling *evidence of all.* "Anyway, I am an Aussie and you know Aussies — I bet you've never met a shy one."

Schwarzer was born in Sydney 24 years ago to German parents who had emigrated in search of a better life. His father ran the local children's football club and put him in goal "because he reckoned I kept tripping over my own feet as an outfield player". From such beginnings, Schwarzer has become the most unlikely, yet most significant, of Bryan Robson's exotic signings.

The Middlesbrough manager's outlay on foreigners is fast approaching £30 million, yet it was only after a relatively modest £1.25 million investment in Schwarzer at the end of February that it really began to pay dividends.

Before Schwarzer's arrival, Middlesbrough had won five FA Carling Premiership games all season. In March, with his assured presence generating calm, they recorded four straight league vic*tories to suggest an escape* from what had appeared the certainty of relegation. Schwarzer also produced fine *performances against Stock*port County in the Coca-Cola *Cup semi-final to help his* club to the first important *final in its 121-year history.*

Tomorrow, at Wembley, he *will add another twist* to a bizarre season that started with him sitting *in the stands* in Germany and included an unsuccessful *trial with* Manchester City. "I can't quite believe what has happened," Schwarzer said. "I have felt down at times, but I never lost my confidence and now I am playing at Wembley. Mind you, for all the glamour, our main goal has still got to be survival."

Possessing a strong belief in his own ability as well as dual nationality, Schwarzer had travelled to Germany as a fresh-faced 21-year-old in search of his fortune. Instead, he endured 2½ years *"of being* messed about" by Kaiserslautern before walking out. "I *am* not being arrogant, but I *knew I was worth a place in* the side," he said.

Retreating to the Australia squad, Schwarzer talked to *countrymen playing in Eng*land and three days later was *on his way to Maine Road for* a trial. Neither Manchester *City nor he were impressed,* but his trial match was against Bradford City and for three months he proved his *brilliance with them in the first division,* as well as two high-profile FA Cup ties, against Everton and Sheffield Wednesday. *Robson came* calling, offering Bradford a £1 *million profit on their invest*ment after just 16 games, and *tomorrow the fairy-tale* will almost be complete.

Schwarzer, though, *hopes* that there will be no more *frustrations. "Kaiserslautern* won the cup in Germany, but *were relegated by a goal with* just eight minutes of this season remaining, and I don't want a repeat of that," *he said. "It has always been* my ambition to play in the *Premiership* and even though the cups are a nice diversion, it is vital that we don't let them deflect us from the real aim." Nothing, one suspects, will deflect Schwarzer from his goals, figuratively and literally.

First-class Claridge back on track

Richard Hobson meets a Leicester City forward enjoying the best form of his life at Filbert Street

Nothing tests the imagination like a photo-opportunity. It is an occasion for posing in contrived situations that *become less and less relevant* to the event they are intended to promote. *This week, Filbert Street staged* a classic of its type.

Three of the Leicester City players were called upon to publicise the *Coca-Cola Cup final,* against Middlesbrough, tomorrow. Emile Heskey, *nicknamed "Bruno",* put on a pair of boxing gloves. Kasey Keller, a United States international, was handed a baseball bat. But what to do with the third man?

"Perhaps you could put me on a horse and lead me to the bookies," Steve Claridge said with a chuckle.

It takes a special kind of person to be able to laugh at his own misfortune, but then Claridge has needed a sense of humour down the years. In his cathartic autobiography, *Tales From The Boot Camps,* he estimates his gambling losses at *more than* £300,000 since he placed his first bet, at the age of 11. There *are parts* of the book that might have been penned by Thomas Hardy, such is the *extent of the* ill fortune that befalls him.

An adopted child, he was diagnosed as *having* a heart condition at 12 (he still *takes medication*) and released by Portsmouth at 17. Alan Ball, then in charge at Fratton Park, paid out the remainder of Claridge's contract. The £500 was gambled away that same afternoon. Since then, Claridge has played in every division of the Football League, as well as for Basingstoke, Fareham Town and Weymouth.

His addiction was exposed in a newspaper last year shortly before Leicester's first division play-off final against Crystal Palace. Claridge scored the winning goal in extra-time. "Once it had come out in the papers, I had no reservations about going through *with the book,*" Claridge said. "I *have nothing in my* life to brag about *but, if people ask* questions, I have to *be honest.*"

Claridge, 31 on Thursday, has been determined to seize his belated opportunity in the top flight this season and has emerged as one of the most important members of a side that has held its own.

He said: "I knew my gambling was an addiction for some time, but it was only at the start of the season, with the challenge of the Premiership, that I realised it was getting out of hand. You feel unable to stop yourself doing something, even though you know it is wrong. Unless you have been there, it is difficult to appreciate."

Claridge believes that he has been at the wrong club at the wrong time. He was sold by Aldershot to keep the club solvent and by Luton Town when they needed to meet a tax bill. A traumatic 2½ years at Cambridge United *ended* when he *punched* John Beck, the manager.

Such tales of violence are rare. Claridge is boundlessly eccentric, *but no hellraiser. His voice is soft* almost to the point of being inaudi*ble and, as he recounts parts of his* life, his head begins to sag as if he is a schoolboy fearing chastisement.

"In all honesty, I know that gambling has not affected my game. Drinking is a different matter. I have never hurt my body — just my bank balance," Claridge said.

He is happier than at any stage of his career. "I have rows with Martin O'Neill, like I have with all the managers I've played under. But with him you forgive and forget," he said. "You have to enjoy times like this because there are so many down sides in football, particularly in the lower divisions. Nobody has to remind me of that." And then he grinned — again.

Claridge: happy at Leicester

FOR THE RECORD

BASKETBALL

EUROLEAGUE: Quarter-finals: Third legs: Stefanel Milan (It) 61 Olimpija Ljubljana (Slovenia) 77; Teamsystem Bologna (It) 62 Barcelona (Sp) 87 (Ljubljana and Barcelona qualify for final four championship).
BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Leopards 109 (Burks 23, Youngblood 20, Davis 18, Baker 18) *Hemel & Watford Royals 94 (Vogel 23,* Schutz 19, Quashie 11)

BOWLS

SWANSEA: C/S (Insurance) Welsh indoor fours championship: Fours: *Quarter-finals:* Llanelli (M Roberts) w/o Cardiff (P Rowlands) scr; Rhondda (J Jones) beat Cardiff (M Leiman) 21-16; Swansea (J Price) bt Torfaen (A Burgess) 19-11; Port Talbot (B Powell) bt Ogwr (J Hoskins) 19-14

SHARJAH CUP

SRI LANKA v PAKISTAN

SHARJAH (Pakistan won toss): Sri Lanka *beat Pakistan by 19 runs.*

SRI LANKA

S T Jayasuriya lbw b Younis	3
†R S Kaluwitharana lbw b Akram	0
M Atapattu c Mushtaq b Salim Malik	94
P A de Silva st Moin b Saqlain	97
*A Ranatunga c Rameez b Saqlain	20
R S Mahanama c Younis b Akram	3
W P U J C Vaas b Saqlain	0
H P Tillekaratne run out	1
H D P K Dharmasena not out	3
M Muralitharan not out	4
Extras (lb 6, w 12)	18
Total (8 wkts, 50 overs)	243

S de Silva did not bat

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-3, 2-4, 3-188, 4-222, *5-232, 6-232, 7-233, 8-238*

BOWLING: Akram 10-1-52-2; Younis 7-1-34-1; Saqlain 10-0-47-3; Mushtaq 10-0-44-0; Afridi 9-1-39-0; Salim Malik 4-0-21-1

PAKISTAN

Rameez Raja b S de Silva	6
Shahid Afridi c S de Silva b Jayasuriya	67
Ijaz Ahmed c S de Silva b Dharmasena	19
Salim Malik lbw b Muralitharan	51
Inzamam-ul-Haq c Kaluwitharana b Jayasuriya	9
Mohammad Wasim c Tillekaratne b Muralitharan	17
†Moin Khan not out	30
*Wasim Akram st Kaluwitharana b Muralitharan	0
Mushtaq Ahmed run out	0
Saqlain Mushtaq run out	1
Waqar Younis not out	9
Extras (lb 7, nb 5, w 4)	16
Total (9 wkts, 50 overs)	224

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-21, 2-84, 3-111, 4-*140, 5-173, 6-190, 7-190, 8-190, 9-197*

BOWLING: Vaas 8-0-45-0, S de Silva 7-0-24-1; Muralitharan 10-0-38-3; Dharmasena *7-0-39-1; Jayasuriya 10-0-42-2; P A de Silva 6-1-29-0*

Umpires: C Mitchley (South Africa) and S Dunn (New Zealand)

KUALA LUMPUR: ICC Trophy: Group E: Kenya 153 (48.2 overs) bt Scotland 37-3 (23) on faster run rate. Denmark 126 (48.1) bt Canada 119 (21.2) by seven runs

	P	W	Ab	L	pts
Kenya	3	2	1	0	5
Scotland	3	1	1	1	3
Denmark	3	1	1	1	3
Canada	3	0	1	2	1

(Scotland placed above Denmark as they *won the match between the two teams*)

Group F: Bangladesh 141-7 (31.4) bt Holland 171 (49.5) on faster run rate. Ireland 223-7 (50) bt *Hong Kong 172* (45.3) by 51 runs

	P	W	Ab	L	pts
Bangladesh	3	2	1	0	5
Ireland	3	2	1	0	5
Holland	3	0	1	2	1
Hong Kong	3	0	1	2	1

(Placings decided on run-rate)

Remaining games: Semi-finals: Kenya v *Ireland, tomorrow; Bangladesh v Scotland,* Tuesday. Third-placed final: Thursday 10 April. Final: Saturday, April 12

CYCLING

TROIS JOURS DE LA PANNE: Final stage: Section one (113km from La Panne to Coxyde): 1, F Guidi (It), 2hr 24min 33sec; 2, M Sciandri (GB) same time; 3, E Dekker (Holl). Section two (16.2km time-trial): 1, R Sorensen (Den), 19min 39sec; 2, J Museeuw (Bel) same time; 3, M Cauz (It) at 17sec. Final overall standings: 1, *Museeuw* 11hr 51min 36sec; 2, Bomans at 7sec; 3, Milesi 49; 4, D Zanette (It) 1min 12sec; 5, B Dietz (Ger) 1:51; 6, H De Clercq *(Bel) at 2:12; 7, De Smet 2:20; 8, A Tchmil* (Ukr) 5:13; 9, Guidi (It) same time; 10, Magnien 5:45

FOOTBALL

Thursday's late results

ICIS LEAGUE: Premier division: Sutton United 3 Aylesbury 3. Second division: Leatherhead 3 Banstead 1

AVON INSURANCE COMBINATION: First division: Arsenal 0 Bristol Rovers 1

CENTRAL CONFERENCE LEAGUE: *Worcester City 2 Hereford 1*

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE: First division: Canterbury 1 Greenwich 2; Herne Bay 0 Furness 1

JEWSON EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE: Premier division: Fakenham 1 Great Yarmouth 1; Halstead 4 Hadleigh 3; Watton 1 Diss 2

SCHOOLS MATCHES: Isle Of Wight Festival: Doncaster 5 Lowestoft and North Suffolk 4; Rotherham 1 Luton 6; Vale Of White Horse 1 *Wellingborough 1; Reading 1* Wakefield 2; Blackburn 2 Newham 0; Wirral 1 Seaport and Fareham 1

SOUTH EAST COUNTIES: Second division: Swindon Yth 2 Southampton Yth 0

European under-21 championship: Qualifying group one: Croatia 2 Slovenia 0 (in Sibenik)

NEHRU GOLD CUP: *Ghana 0 China 0 (in* Cochin, India).

SPANISH CUP: Semi-final, second leg: Barcelona 3 Las Palmas 0 (Barcelona win 7-0 on agg)

RUGBY LEAGUE

YOUTH INTERNATIONAL: *French Presidents XIII 24 Great Britain (Batle) 6*

RUGBY UNION

Super 12 tournament

Auckland	29	Canterbury	28

Auckland Blues: Tries: Vidiri, R Brooke. Conversions: Cashmore (2). Penalty goals: Cashmore (5). Canterbury Crusaders: Tries: Nepia, Lilley, Gibson. Conversions: Mehrtens 2. Penalty goals: Mehrtens 3

(at Pukekohe)

ACT	50	Free State	23

Australian Capital Territory: Tries: Roff (2), Robinson, Holbeck, Hardy, Larkham. Conversions: Knox (4). Penalty goals: Knox (4). Free State: Tries: Drotske, Brink, penalty try. Conversion: de Beer. Penalty goals: de Beer 2

(at Bruce Stadium, Canberra)

SNOOKER

PLYMOUTH: British Open: Third round: Quarter-finals: *S Hendry (Scot)* bt D Harold (Eng) 5-3. Semi-finals: *M Williams (Wal)* bt P Ebdon (Eng) 6-5.

SPEEDWAY

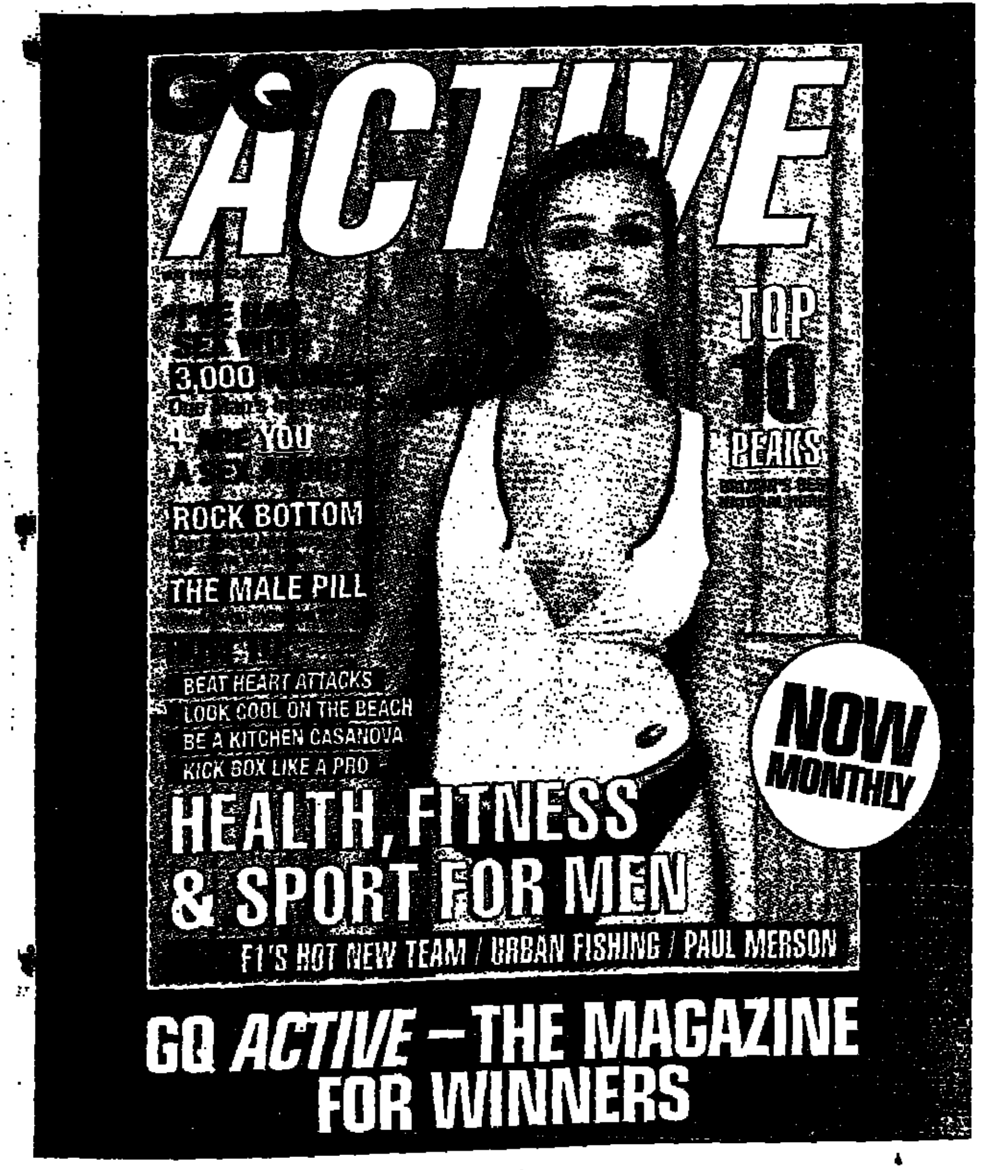
PREMIER LEAGUE CUP: *Sheffield 59 (R Kessler 14, S Smith 13, R Aes 11, M Wolter* 11); Stoke 30 (L Collins 13, Stuart Robson 9); Ipswich 44 (C Louis 12, J Doncaster 9, S *Johnston 9) Eastbourne 46 (S Danno 11, S* Andersson 10)

SQUASH

CARDIFF: Leekes British Open: Men: Second round: *C Walker (GB)* bt D Evans (GB) 13-15, 12-15, 15-9, 15-6, 15-12; Jansher Khan (Pak) beat J Kneipp (Aus) 15-9, 15-6, 15-9. Quarter-finals: P Nicol (Scot) bt B Martin (Aus) 15-10, 15-11, 13-15, 15-12; R Eyles (Aus) bt J Power (Can) 15-13, 5-15, 9-15, 15-12, 15-11. Women: Second round: J Martin (GB) bt R Grinham (Aus) 9-6, 9-2, 9-2; F Geaves (GB) bt S Schone (Ger) 9-6, 10-8, 4-9, 9-4. Quarter-finals: S Fitz-Gerald (Aus) bt E Irving (Aus) 9-1, 9-3, *9-2; S Wright (Eng)* bt L Charman (Eng) 9-7, 9-5, 9-4

TENNIS

DAVIS CUP: World group: Second round: Australia lead Czech Republic 2-0 (in Adelaide: P Rafter bt M Damm 6-1, 7-6, 4-6, *6-4; M Philippoussis bt D Rikl* 6-1, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4). Sweden lead South Africa 1-0 (in Vaxjo, T Enqvist bt G Stafford 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1). Italy lead Spain 1-0 (in Pesaro, O Camporese bt C Moya 6-7, 6-7, 6-1, 6-3, 6-3). Asia/Oceania Zone: Group one: Second round: New Zealand lead Indonesia 2-0 (in Jakarta); South Korea lead *China 2-0 (in Beijing). Euro/African Zone:* Group one: Second round: Great Britain level with Zimbabwe 1-1 (in London). *Belgium level with Denmark* 1-1 (in Brussels), Slovakia lead Israel 2-0 (in Bratislava). Austria lead Croatia 2-0 (in Graz). Asia/Oceania: Group two: Relegation play-offs: Pakistan v Singapore, no play yesterday, rain (in Islamabad)



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Olazabal picks up the swing in New Orleans

SPORT

FOOTBALL 47
Leicester lying in wait for Robson's all-stars

SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

Irish challenger can extend growing influence of women on famous steeplechase

Antonin looks answer to National

By Richard Evans
Racing Correspondent

FOR a race, the public perception of which epitomises machismo and derring-do, the Martell Grand National possesses an enduring female streak. During four decades in the middle of this century, Mrs Mirabel Topham made her formidable presence felt as owner of Aintree.

More recently, Jenny Pitman has breached a long-standing male bastion by training Corbiere and Royal Athlete to win the world's most famous steeplechase. In between, Charlotte Brew became the first woman jockey to ride in the race, while both Geraldine Rees and Rosemary Henderson have since gone one better by completing the course.

As the 38 likely runners face the judge this afternoon for the 150th running of the race, the trend could be endorsed as never before in what could turn out to be the Women's National. My shortlist of six for a race expected to attract £65 million in bets contains three horses trained by the fairer sex.

Although Mrs Pitman has suffered a disappointing season by her standards, the victory of Mudahim in the Irish Grand National on Monday showed that her string is returning to form — and both her runners deserve the closest scrutiny, despite having been pulled up on their most recent outings.

Nahthen Lad, owned by a northerner and pronounced appropriately "now then lad" as opposed to "naythen lad", ended last season by winning the Sun Alliance Chase at Cheltenham, a race that regulary provides future National winners. Mr Mulligan, second on that occasion, went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup this season.

After a delayed start to this campaign, Nahthen Lad ran a lacklustre race at Haydock, after which he was found to have a sore foot. He then ran superbly over an inadequate trip at Chepstow, before being pulled up on fast ground at Cheltenham last month. However, the signs are that he is returning to form. "He's started misbehaving, which means he is coming back to his best," Mrs Pitman said yesterday.

Smith's Band, an outstanding jumper, has raced once this season ... when he was pulled up at Newbury five weeks ago. However, he delighted Mrs Pitman in a private gallop at the Berkshire course last Saturday. Bought to win the National, he has the assistance of Richard Dunwoody, twice a National winner, but there is a slight stamina doubt.

Live television coverage from Aintree begins on BBC1 at 1.45pm; the race starts at 3.45

However, my selection is Antonin, trained by Sue Bramall. Three seasons ago he was one of the most-improved chasers in training, winning both the Racing Post Chase and the Ritz Club Chase, before losing his form in dramatic style.

After signing off last season by finishing eighth in the National but without a win, Mrs Bramall moved from her base at Hutton Sessay, in Yorkshire to Borleagh Manor, in Ireland. The change of scenery did the trick and Antonin won the Grand National Trial at Punchestown by a distance six weeks ago.

The preparation for Aintree has gone perfectly and, just as important, the revitalised horse is potentially well treated with ten stone as he has plummeted down the handicap during his two disappointing seasons. Having put in a clear round over the National fences 12 months ago, Antonin can provide the Irish with their first winner since L'Escargot in 1975.

Others to consider include Go Ballistic, fourth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, who is the form choice but is not certain to take to these fences. Lo Stregone, third in the Hennessy and prepared specifically for this race, stays well but is not nicknamed "Slow Stregone" for nothing.

Suny Bay is a classy performer, but relishes softer going and Charlie Brooks, his trainer, fears the ground will be too fast. Should overnight rain arrive in sufficient quantity, he would come strongly into the reckoning, along with Wylde Hyde. The prevailing good ground will encourage supporters of Avro Anson, who loves to hear his hooves rattle.

Lord Gyllene has improved throughout this season but has done most of his racing at Uttoxeter and was no match last year for the likes of Nahthen Lad or Mr Mulligan. Killeshin, an out-and-out stayer who won twice beyond four miles last term, has been carrying big weights all year and looks the best of the outsiders.

However, the horse I fear most is General Wolfe, trained by Tim Forster, who has already sent out the winners of three Nationals. Ignore his disappointing effort at Chepstow four weeks ago as the race came too soon after he had defied top weight when winning at Haydock. He is reported to be back to his best and comes from a yard in top form.

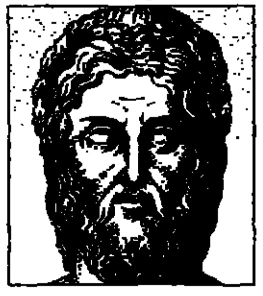
THE TIMES TOP TIPS

Richard Evans
Racing Correspondent

1. ANTONIN
2. General Wolfe
3. Nahthen Lad
4. Suny Bay

Julian Muscat

1. NAHTHEN LAD
2. Turning Trix
3. Antonin
4. Lord Gyllene

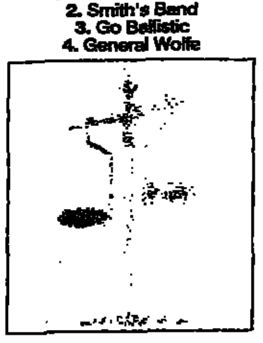


Thunderer

1. GENERAL WOLFE
2. Avro Anson
3. Suny Bay
4. Lo Stregone

Rob Hughes
Chief Sports Writer

1. LORD GYLLENE
2. Smith's Band
3. Go Ballistic
4. General Wolfe



Gerald Hubbard
Private Handicapper

1. SUNY BAY
2. Go Ballistic
3. Antonin
4. Wylde Hide

Preparing to risk all in ultimate challenge

Rob Hughes on the dangers faced today by jockeys and their horses

It is difficult to know where to place the eye or the heart at Aintree this morning. The compulsion to see and to enjoy the 150th Grand National pulls us through the turnstile; the profit, the pain, even the ultimate cost of death in the afternoon, preys on our minds.

"This a business which can injure the soul as much as the body," Steve Smith Eccles, that tough Derbyshire former National Hunt rider, once opined. As the three-day Aintree meeting that features the Grand National evolved this week, one could hardly get the words out of one's head.

Between the jockeys' room and the winning enclosure, one sees the human cost. Lorcan Wyer, his face meticulously pieced together after a crushing fall — a horse's hoof having been temporarily embedded into the left side of it — is back at Aintree, where he fell in November; back to face Becher's and the other 29 jumps this afternoon. Jamie Evans, a top Australian jockey eager to make his mark on the world-famous steeplechase, appeared yesterday, barely able to hobble towards the track-side; yet he and his connections still intend to persuade the Jockey Club doctor that his knee injury is no impediment for the National.

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Richard Dunwoody 43

There is, heaven help him, a 17-year-old, Joe Tizzard, riding in the race that visibly frightens the most hardened of jockeys. Romance or foolhardiness?

When riders and horses reach for the absolute limits, when they clear the biggest fences put before man under Rules, and do it with exhilarating grace, of course it is uplifting. Yet racing is injurious to more than man. Richard Dunwoody, arguably the most successful rider among the probable 38 who go this afternoon, has just experienced 48 hours that would break, never mind injure, the soul of lesser mortals, or less obsessed individuals.

Dunwoody's Thursday was horrendous. In little more than an hour, he partnered One Man, a horse going well until another rider observed: "You've burst, you've burst!" Blood from the nostrils of One Man, by now flowing over Dunwoody's breeches, signalled a burst blood vessel, and Dunwoody instantly pulled up his mount.

In the next race, Mulligan gave Dunwoody a dramatic fall, from which both horse and rider ruefully got to their feet. And then, in the fourth race, the worst experience on the racecourse: Coonawara, taking a daring leap over Becher's, came down the 6ft 9in drop from the top of the fence to the turf, and even a layman could see the hind leg buckle, could sense that this horse would have to be shot to put him out of his misery. It was the first of two fatalities at Aintree so far.

Dunwoody will not offer a word of acknowledgement to the turmoil, the emotion, the dread of race riding, or the sadness that must lodge inside a man who came down from Becher's so despairingly. Ironically, ten years ago, the same Dunwoody had written of Becher's: "You need a clear approach ... if you take it a shade long or short, your horse can come down too close to the brook and lose his hind legs."

Today's is the second National of the week. The Irish was on Monday, and ended with two horses dead, Coq Hardi Affair and The Latvian Lark, and later in that Fairyhouse meeting with one rider, Shane Broderick, on a life-support system in a Dublin hospital. He has, at the very least, serious spinal cord injury, and it may seem too little, too late that the Aintree race today has as its special charity appeal a fund for precisely that type of injury and the welfare of jockeys.

Why *do* they go on? Dunwoody, again, puts the answers into action more telling than words. By the end of the card on Thursday, he was a winner. By yesterday he was the leading jockey of the Grand National meeting, bringing home three more winners over these demanding obstacles.

In particular on Cyborgo in the 3.10, Dunwoody was the master: with hands, heels and knees, with the whip barely flourished, he communicated his exceptional will-power, his determination to be first past the post, to a talented but allegedly lazy racehorse. Dunwoody niggled, cajoled and drove the animal to carry him through. It was the pulse of horse racing, the thrill of a huge crowd, perhaps the profit of tens of thousands who back from afar.

Two emotions in one, this racing game, and I was struck by one reaction to the incident at Southwell on Tuesday, where a bolting horse had kicked over an infant's pram, miraculously without harming the child. "It is time they barred prams from racecourses," one observer wrote. Child's play, it is not.

☐ Penny A Day, trained by Mary Reveley, was put down after breaking a leg in the Oddbins Handicap Hurdle at Aintree yesterday. The seven-year-old, winner of five races over hurdles and over £37,000, shattered his left-fore cannon bone when coming down at the eighth flight.

Stephen Swiers, riding Mr Boston, suffers a crashing fall at the second last in the Martell Fox Hunters Chase at Aintree yesterday

Richardson conquers Black

ANDREW RICHARDSON gave Great Britain a fighting chance of reaching the qualifying round for the world group of the Davis Cup last night with the performance of a lifetime to beat Byron Black, of Zimbabwe, in five sets (Alix Ramsay writes). It was Richardson's first Davis Cup appearance, his first five-set match and his first victory over a player ranked in the world's top 50.

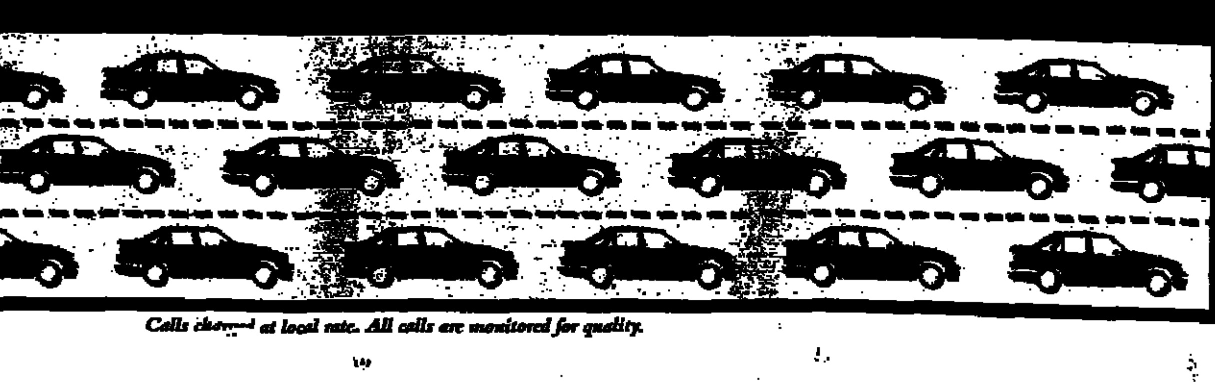
Until yesterday, Richardson had been hidden in the relative obscurity of the satellite and challenger circuits, the first rung on the ladder for journeymen professionals. Overcoming cramp in the final set, he outlasted and outfought the more experienced man.

Black, ranked No 46 in the world, had been very complimentary about his younger opponent, claiming that Richardson's big game could do some damage. However, he probably did not expect that Richardson could overcome the 220 ranking places that separate them.

Davis Cup report and photograph 44

"I've never played in an atmosphere like it," Richardson, 23, said afterwards, looking a little non-plussed by it all. "I just tried to control the things that I know I can do well.

"I don't think people thought I could win, but I always thought I had a chance. And now we're level with Zimbabwe, I don't see any reason why Jamie [Delgado] can't beat Byron on Sunday."



M4

Until July, before you fly you've got to crawl.

At the moment the M4 is littered with roadworks, making the traffic to Heathrow even worse than before. So if you're going to Paris or Brussels, do yourself a favour and take the Eurostar from Waterloo.

0345 30 30 30
or see an appointed travel agent or railway station.

Calls charged at local rate. All calls are monitored for quality.

هكذا من الاعلى

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weekend

SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

Gone runabout in the Antipodes
travel · 18-19

Business deals on the 19th hole are old hat, but new networkers are now teeing off. **Kathryn Knight** reports

DES JENSON

From left: Wendy Hoad, Rhona Tridgell, Karen Manley and Natalie Evans at Hanbury Manor, Hertfordshire: "I wouldn't normally get senior people to my meetings, but as soon as I began playing golf I started to fall over them"

Rise of the iron maidens

Think golf. Images of ruddy-faced executives in diamond pattern V-neck sweaters may spring to mind, networking their way round the course with an assorted bunch of like-minded businessmen on a Thursday afternoon out of the office.

Think *women's* golf, and you may be forgiven for picturing well-heeled housewives in pastels, snatching a golf afternoon with girl friends.

Now imagine yourself a spectator at Dukesdene golf club in Croydon on a summer day. You may be surprised. Here, instead of housewives, you will see 50 powerful and impressive professional women from the advertising, marketing and television industries hobnobbing and networking on the fairway for all their worth.

The Laser Ladies' Golf Day, which began last year, was designed so that working women can gather to clink clubs and swap industry gossip. Professional women, it seems, have finally woken up to the career potential offered by an afternoon discussing pars and birdies.

As a sport and hobby, golf is burgeoning in popularity. In the first half of this decade alone, 476 new courses opened, increasing the number in the British Isles by almost 30 per cent. But traditionally, like the shooting party and the gentleman's club, the businessman's golf day and its myriad networking opportunities have tended to exclude women. Indeed, women in most golf clubs are strictly second best, either banned from playing on certain days, or limited to playing at certain hours.

At Laser, an ITV airtime sales house and part of the Granada group, Kerry Ann Klopper was tired of watching her bosses sloping off to industry golf days and hogging all the schmooze possibilities. Together with Karen Manley and other colleagues, she set up the company's first ladies golf day for any women in the same line of business who wanted both to learn to play and get to know each other in the process. "Almost all of our management and directors are men and play golf, so they get the chance to go to golf industry days where they can meet. We wanted to see what all the fuss was about, and also we knew there is enormous potential for networking on the golf course," Kerry Ann says.

After mailing 250 women, she received an enthusiastic yes from nearly half of them in just three days. Six weeks later, 33 of them gathered at Dukesdene on a hot July day.

"I think women can have a hard time from men on the golf course, and while many of them want to get involved in these circles they are a bit frightened that they can't penetrate them," Kerry Ann says.

Some of the women were novices, some experienced golfers. Some had brought clients with them, some had brought a friend. Everyone wanted to play the chaps at their own game. "It was really very good for business, because we got women from lots of different parts of the industry together in an informal setting so we could get to know each other in a free and unpressurised environment. We had tremendous fun, and have had lots of calls from women demanding to know when the next one is."

The new woman golfer could be a positive role model for aspiring Nineties woman. Well dressed, articulate and jolly, they are all extremely busy, the kind of people who are skiing one week and in New York for a meeting the next. It is a wonder they find the time to play golf at all. But like any

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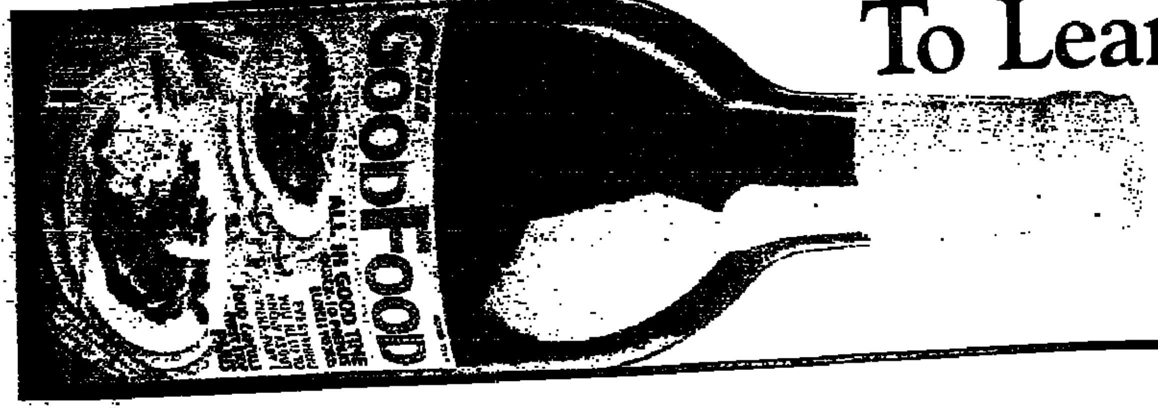

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SERIOUS SHOPPING

HAGGLING

ROBERT CRAMPTON

Much of what I was taught at school has turned out to be useless, but seldom have I found it to be wrong. The way I was taught to put together a peg bag with my initials embroidered on the outer pocket is, I am sure, as close to the correct method as it is possible to learn. Should I ever have to make a Norwegian upside-down pudding, or Hawaiian beefburgers, or a poker, or a forged historical document with its edges singed in the oven, then I am confident my technique is sound.

There is one piece of information I was given, however, that I have found to be spectacularly erroneous. It was given in a geography lesson. We were studying town planning, plotting the positions of the Central Business District (CBD — remember that?), the OBD, the suburbs and so forth on maps. We were given a list of different sorts of shops and a blank high street — and told to sketch in where we thought the shops would be. And they say educational standards were higher 20 years ago than they are today.

"Obviously," said the teacher, with the withering scorn of which only geography and PE teachers (the latter turn into the former when their cruciate ligaments give way) are truly capable, "the butchers will not all be next to each other; they will space themselves out along the street".

Wrong. As anyone with eyes knows, next to each other is exactly where the butchers — or bakers, or department stores — will want to be. They will crawl over broken glass to site their shops next to someone already selling precisely the same thing.

I was reminded of this lesson the other day on Tottenham Court Road in London, which proves how hugely wrong my geography teacher was. It is the mass-market electronics centre for London, for Britain, and possibly — judging by the number of Belgians and Swedes you see there carting away large oblong boxes — north western Europe. The southern half of Tottenham Court Road — aside from one or two pornographers — only has electronics shops. In theory, Tottenham Court Road provides that rare chance for the British shopper — the chance to haggle. Haggling is one of those foreign arts of which we, as a people, are deeply suspicious, deeply in awe and deeply ignorant. But I thought I should give it a try.

I went into the biggest shop I could see and found a man called Tony. We had a long conversation. Not far into it, Tony had convinced me without any effort that the portable CD player I wanted to buy was in fact a Sony Sports Discman with ESP. ESP does not mean the machine can see into the future or bend spoons, it means it has Electronic Shock Protection — an anti-jump device. Tony dropped it on the counter as proof. I was impressed. It cost £269 — well over twice as much as all of the others. Nonetheless, I decided I just had to have it.

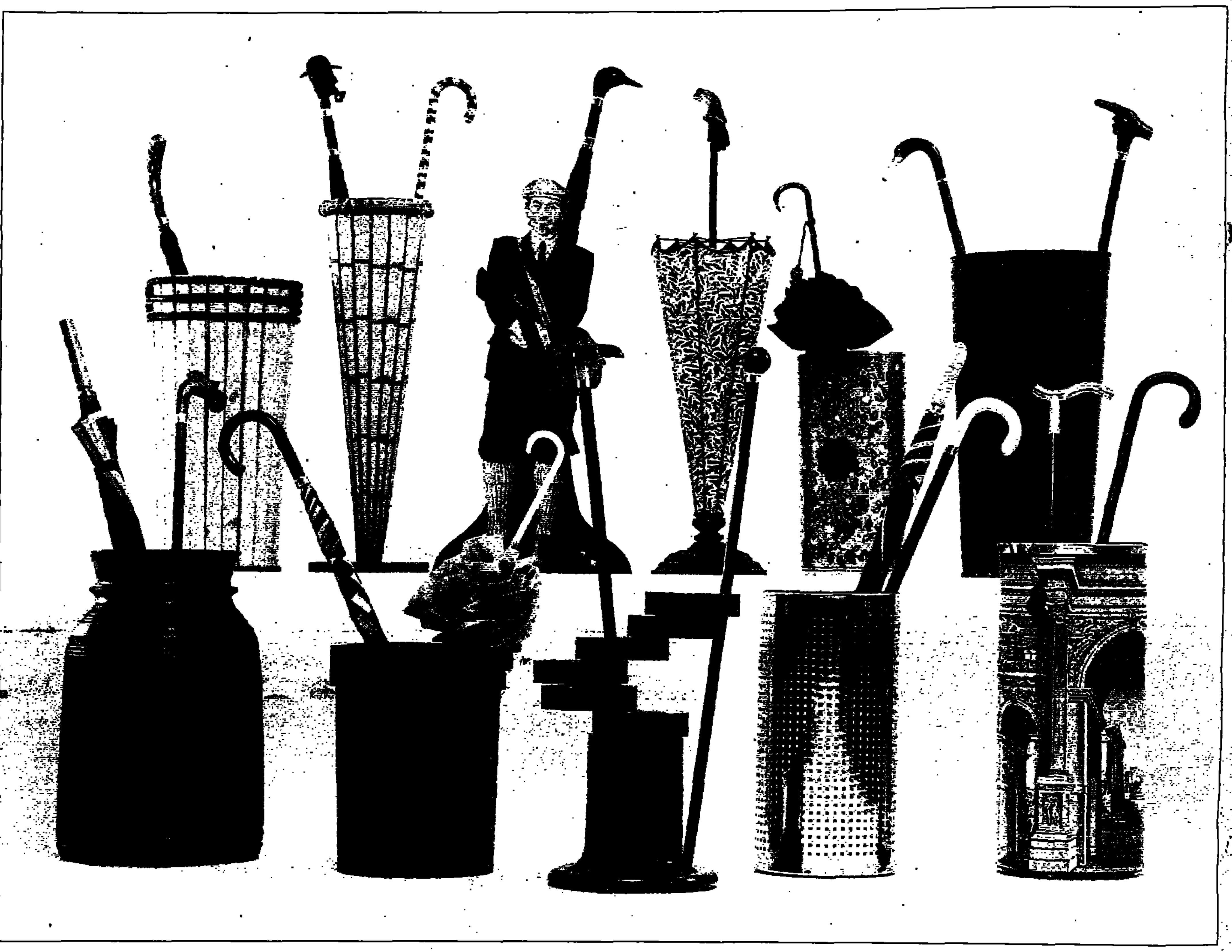
Craftily, I did not tell Tony. I hummed and hahhed. I asked lots of questions, the sort of questions I always ask when I buy something whose working parts I cannot see, do not understand, and suspect don't work. Each question was a variant of: "Please, Tony, tell me: will it break?" Tony assured me that it would not. Batteries? Yes. Guarantee? One year. From the manufacturer? Indeed.

Now we stood and looked at the machine on the counter for a long while, saying nothing. Tony began to yawn. Eventually, he said that he felt he could offer it at £242.10p. I said, right, I'll think about it. Feeling terribly sophisticated, I left. I was with three friends. We all dispersed along the Tottenham Court Road and sought the price of the same model in the other shops. Prices varied from £269 less 10 per cent (which, one of my friends pointed out, was what Tony had offered) to £230. I was terribly excited by this.

One of my friends said I should buy the one for £230. I said no, no, no. There was much talk of 100 per cent mark-ups, of Tony's thirst for a commission, of entrepreneurship thriving in the spring sunshine. I went back to Tony. I've been offered this for £230 down the road, I said. He looked bored. One-year's guarantee, batteries included. Tony stifled a yawn. "Oh, right," he said. I said: "Will you sell it to me for less?" "No," he said, and I realised that not only are British shoppers embarrassed by haggling, but British shop assistants nursing bad hangovers are too.

Making a stand for umbrellas

MAKE a splash with a distinctive umbrella stand, to instantly liven up the hallway. Just as umbrellas have become a more stylish accessory, many of these designs will make an impact come rain or shine, says Sudi Pigott



TOP ROW (left to right): Natural stand made from twigs wrapped with plywood bands, £47.50, from Graham & Greene, 4, 7 and 10 Elgin Crescent, W11 (0171-727 4594)

Handwoven, handpainted birch ply and dyed cane umbrella stand in bright shades of blue/yellow/pink designed by Lois Walpole, £52 plus £4.50 p&p, from Rapid Eye (0171-538 5308)

Gamekeeper in Barbour/shooting gent handpainted cut-out stand, £220, from General Trading Company, 144 Sloane Street, SW1 (0171-730 0411)

Dennison Drake Designs fabric and braid covered Mary Poppins-style stand divided into six compartments with brass ball or handpainted thistle, frog, owl or bird handle, £269, from Harrods, Age of Elegance Dept, Knightsbridge, SW1 (0171-730 1234)

Blue and yellow painted china stand, £39.50, from India Jane, 131-133 King's Road, SW3 (0171-351 1060)

Elegant made-to-order leather umbrella stands (allow six to eight weeks), from £249, from Bill Amberg, 10 Chepstow Road, W2 (0171-727 3560)

BOTTOM ROW (left to right): Original tall teak grain measure, from a selection around £175, from India Jane, as before

Authentics opaque blue plastic stand (available in other colours), £23, from the Conran Shop, Michelin House, 81 Fulham Road, SW3 (0171-589 7401)

Original 1960s plastic swirly retro-design in red or orange, £140, from Themes & Variations, 231 Westbourne Grove, W11 (0171-727 5531)

Chrome cylinder in square-hole perforated design with removable drip saucer, £34.95, from The Source, 26-40 Kensington High Street, W8 (0171-937 2626)

Modern Fornasetti design with black and white architectural columns, £450, from Themes & Variations, as before

Photograph by **Des Jenson.** Styling by **Caroline Griffiths.** All umbrellas and walking sticks from **James Smith & Son,** 53 New Oxford Street, WC1 (0171-836 4731)

'You can short-cut your way to meeting senior people'

Continued from page 1

new convert they have embraced the sport with gusto and when they do play, they make the most of it.

Rhona Tridgell, aged 39, a media and communications director for the advertising agency Foote Cone Belding, is a keen preacher of the golfing gospel and the opportunities it affords. She attends as many industry golf days with media companies, marketing and ad agencies as she can.

"You can really short-cut your way to meeting influential people," she says. "I get to meet many more senior people who normally wouldn't come to my meetings, but as soon as I began playing golf I started to fall over them."

Rhona started playing a few years ago after finding an accessible golf club that welcomed women with the same warmth as it did men. "I had been toying with taking up golf for a long time but had been a bit overawed by the male-dominated aspect. Now I can easily go to a golf day a week throughout the summer. I've made so many useful contacts," she says.

"It's nice to know that if I need to I can ring the top man in the company, or say to people you work with 'let's have a round of golf'. It's a good way of accessing people as friends *and* contacts."

As a fundraiser for the advertising industry's charity NABS, Rhona's sister, Helen, also finds her ability to play a few holes very useful.

"It's a new format for fundraising. I used to work in the industry itself and now I can call people I used to work with and ask myself along to their golf days, because it's good for contacts, and for fundraising it's a nice environment in which to chat up people."

For many of these networkers there is no feminist agenda, no "up and at 'em" attitude about men. They love golf and find the contacts they make often turn out to be men.

Natalie Evans, the group marketing manager for the GWR direct marketing association, says: "You don't necessarily talk business on the course but it's a great way of cementing relationships.

"Last year a guy from Texas came over to work for us. He played golf with me and then invited me over to Texas, where I met a lot of people in the radio business. We had a great time and it was good to know I'd made the contacts over there."

Nonetheless, the more hard-headed will realise how attractive the potential rewards are. John Viney, the chairman of the headhunting firm Heidrick and Struggles, knows the areas of recruitment, networking and career development intimately. Women, he believes, are cottoning on to advantageous networking opportunities that have previously been inaccessible.

"In the past, women have been barred from the big occasions where men got together and swapped ideas, such as the grouse shoot and the gentleman's club," he says. "They've had to be content with social or sexual power. But women are learning to network in the same way that men have done for years. Obviously it's a slow process but it's a significant change."

Indeed, Ann Scott, who runs her own PR agency, Ann Scott Associates, regrets she didn't pursue the holy grail of business golf earlier. "When I took up golf the business side was completely incidental. I just wanted a nice way to keep fit, but I am completely overwhelmed by the professional impact of playing golf.

"It's a great asset to be able to play. It's a wonderful way of getting to know people better, as you're sharing a great common interest."

However at 25, Laura Job has seen the golfing light in good time. A client manager for the ad agency TMD Carat, she took a client from Nissan to the Laser day last year. "We had a laugh and it cemented our relationship in an informal environment in a way that was useful to us both. She could introduce me to potential clients and I could introduce her to other people from the agency."

Laura took her first lessons last summer and hopes that in a year or so she will be swinging her club with the best of them. "You meet such a wide variety of people at all levels, and it's nice to see them out of a suit and out of a business context. It's especially good for me because I'm relatively young and it's nice for me to be able to mix with people much further up the hierarchy."

Over the past three years the number of women members of golf clubs has risen by 25,000 in England alone. Sports shops and department stores are reflecting this burgeoning interest.

James Wilson, the UK vice-president of sales and marketing at Kelloway Golf, the largest manufacturer of golf equipment in the world, is in no doubt. "Ten per cent of our manufacturing business in the UK is now for women, and it's growing all the time.

"Working women's golf is opening up and this is reflected in our marketing. We use more lady golfers in our advertising now."

At Marks & Spencer, the natty range of golfing wear for women shows how the winds of change have blown over the nation's courses. From next month, look out for navy, pale blue and lime.

When Wendy Hoad, who runs a golf PR business, started playing a few years ago and was often one of a small number of women on company golf days. Now, she says, there is a noticeable surge in women on the course.

"I think there has been a gradual erosion of the masculine culture that used to surround golf. It's not that men have been hostile but that women have not chosen to take part.

"Now there's a cultural shift: there's much more publicity given to women's golf generally, more ladies golf on television, and clubs are opening up," she says.

If you're left in any doubt about the relentless march of businesswomen's shoes on the golf course, Helen Trigdell has a revealing anecdote.

"I was a guest at a grand dinner for the Solus club, a men-only club for very senior people in marketing and advertising," she recalls. "It was a mostly male occasion but at one point I was in the loos next to a highly respected businesswoman and found we were chatting away about our golf and how the wet and windy weather was playing havoc with our plans.

"It seemed ironic that at this very masculine dinner we were the ones having the golf conversation, in the ladies'".

DOUG MARKE

A swing to networking

JUDY JACKSON (above), a media manager for Barclaycard in London, does not play golf. Saturday afternoons often see her at a football match with work colleagues, but so far she has been unable to penetrate their golf outings. So she is taking up the sport. "It would be worth taking a few lessons, enough to wield a club without embarrassment, and have a day on the course with them," she says.

"I can see the advantages of golf in business. My colleagues are male and always playing golf. They never think to ask me because it's not the sort of thing you can go along to if you're not a vaguely adequate player. I miss out because of it. The great thing about it is that it gives you time to talk. It's not like squash where you're so out of breath you can't speak. It also creates a real bond.

"It's a good way to cement relationships with colleagues, for external networking and increasing your profile."

10 WOMEN-FRIENDLY GOLF CLUBS

MANY golf clubs still treat women as second-class citizens. But those listed are among the best for fair play, either allowing women on to their committees or not restricting the times or days they may play.

- Coxmoor, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire (01623 557359).
- Brockenhurst Manor, Brockenhurst, Hampshire (01590 623332).
- St Enodoc, Wadebridge, Cornwall (01208 863216).
- Trevose, Padstow, Cornwall (01841 520208).
- Denham, Denham, Buckinghamshire (01895 832022).
- West Kilbride, Seamill, West Kilbride, Scotland (01294 823911).
- Wentworth, Virginia Water, Surrey (01344 842201).
- West Hill, Brookwood, Surrey (01483 474365).
- Bristol and Clifton, Clifton, Bristol (01275 393474).
- Vale of Llangollen, Llangollen, Denbighshire, (01978 860906).

Spring a lovely surprise

"Happy Birthday, Happy Anniversary, Happy Retirement and many other happy occasions." National Garden Gift Tokens say it all and open up so much choice.

These colourful tokens come in a range of values and are so easy to post. They can be bought, and exchanged, at most Garden Centres, Garden Shops and Nurseries right across the UK.

So treat them to the gift that grows.

NATIONAL GARDEN GIFT TOKENS
Horticultural Trades Association *(established 1898)*
Theale, Berkshire.

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Conjure up images of simple glamour in two-tone combinations of stripes and swirls, says **Heath Brown**

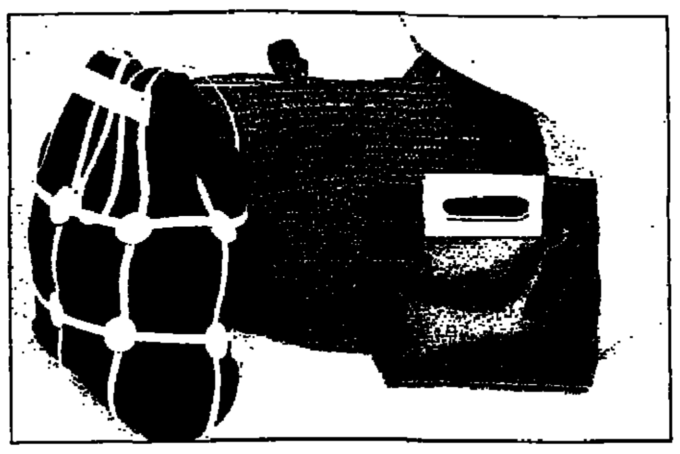
Black and white MAGIC

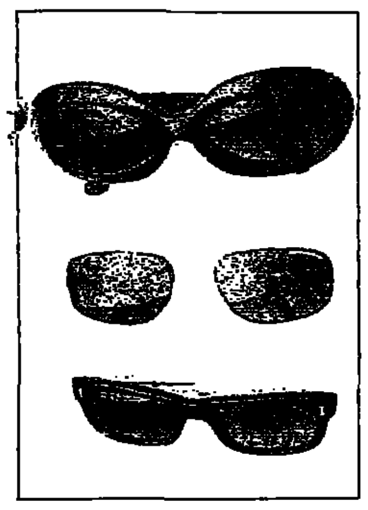
The classic combination of black with white will always be in vogue. Shades and styles go in and out of favour but monochrome remains a timeless investment. Black is flattering, disguises those extra pounds gained over the winter and makes cheaper clothes appear more expensive. But it can look a little dull worn on its own in the summer. By adding a cool, crisp, white contrast you can create a lighter, summery look. It instantly brightens up an outfit without looking garish and gives a sophisticated edge to the simplest of styles.

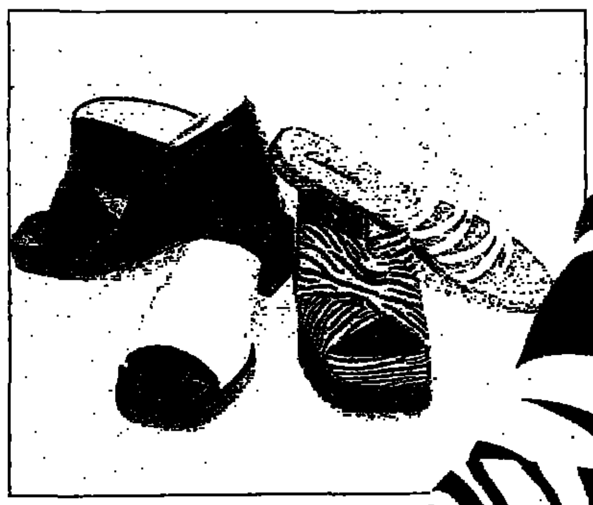
Try wide palazzo trousers with a simple white blouse, or stripy, strappy tops with plain skirts or dresses. Mixing the two colours is an effortless way of creating glamour and elegance. This season the ever-so-fashionable stripe looks great in black and white. Dresses with vertical "bars" are a good buy for those who wish to appear taller, but beware of horizontal striping as it makes you look wider or an unnatural shape. The less harsh horizontal swirls and undulating stripes, however, are an exception as they divert attention away from the body .

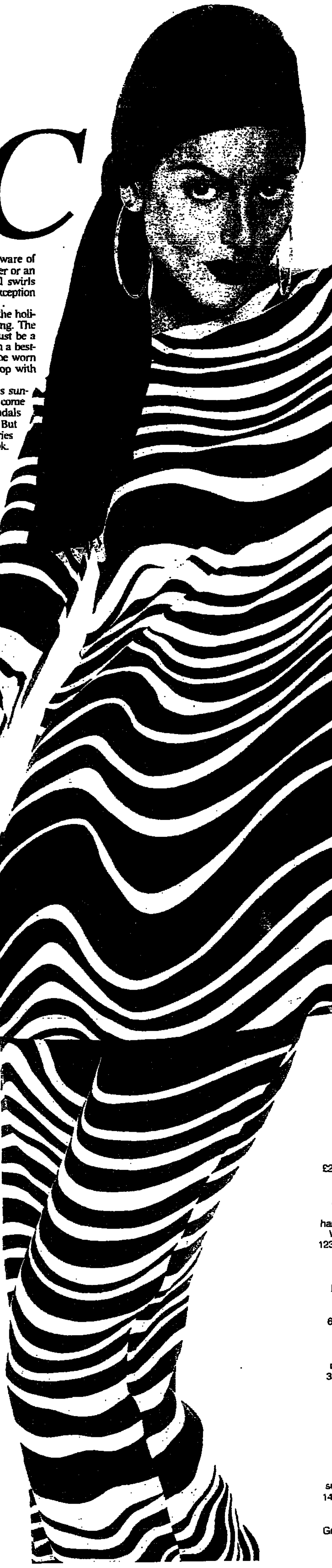
A black and white capsule wardrobe for the holiday season can take the hassle out of packing. The essential garment to go into the suitcase must be a plain black or white swimsuit. This has been a best-seller for years and is versatile enough to be worn beneath a sheer white shirtdress or as a top with trousers.

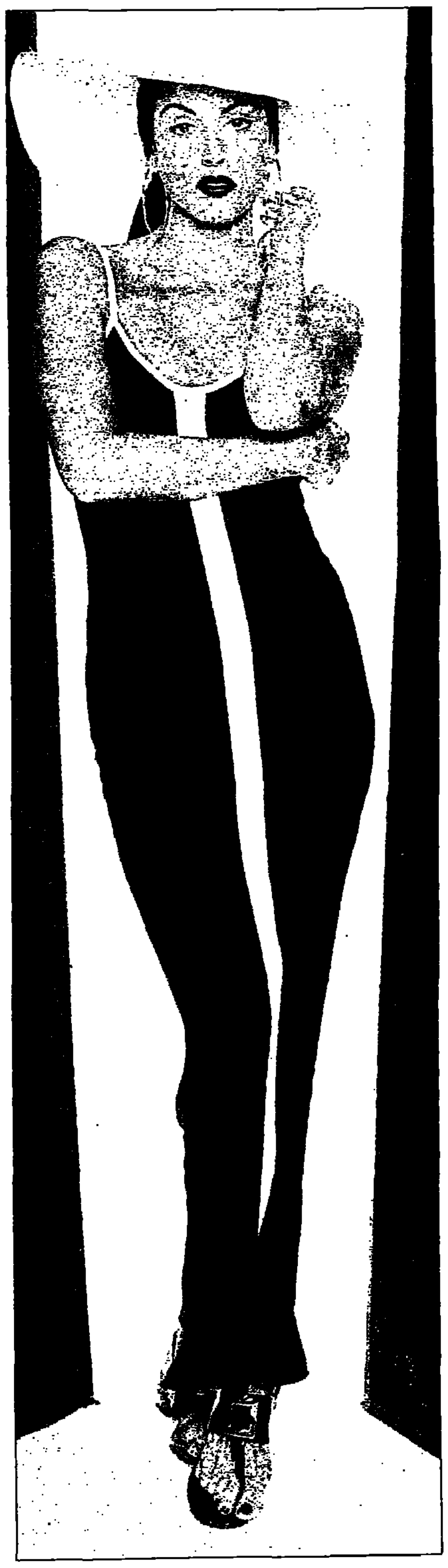
Accessories are easy to find with fabulous sunglasses, two-tone bags and hair clips. Shoes come in wild zebra-print leathers, or go for sandals and mules in brilliant white or matt black. But remember not to go too far with the accessories or it can create a *My Fair Lady* costume look.

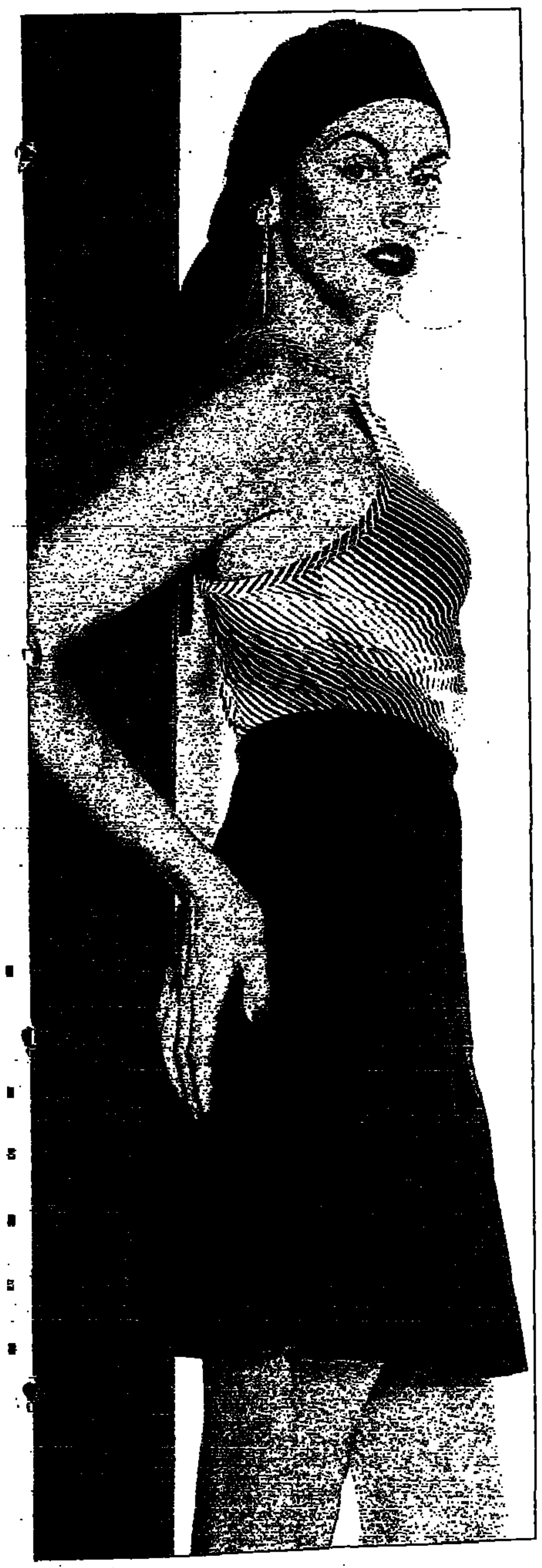












MAIN PICTURE: Swirl print tunic, £305; matching pants, £255, Laurel, 105 New Bond Street, London W1 (0171-493 1153). Black headscarf/sarong, £12, Marks & Spencer, selected branches (0171-935 4422). Large silver hoop earrings, £22, Agatha, 4 South Molton Street, W1 (0171-495 2779)

LEFT: Fine stripe stretch top, £18, Warehouse, branches *nationwide (0171-278 3491)*. Black kick-pleat skirt, £54, Jigsaw, 126-127 New Bond Street, W1 (0171-491 4484) Headscarf/sarong, Marks & Spencer, as before. Earrings, Agatha, as before

RIGHT: Black jersey dress with white stripe, £135, Whistles, 12 St Christopher's Place, W1 (0171-487 4484). White floppy *hat*, £22, *Dollargrand*, Selfridges, W1 (0171-794 3028). Patent thong sandals, £27.50, Wallis, selected branches nationwide (0181-910 1333). Headscarf/sarong, as before. Earrings, as before

Photographs by **Richard Burns.** Hair and make-up by **Sarah Gottschack** using Glauca Rossi Products (mail order, 0171-289 7485) Styling by **Amandip Uppal**

BAGS: (from left) Black satin bag with white leather cage, £215, Marc Cain, 28 New Bond Street, W1 (0171-637 4142). Black raffia bag, £12.99, Accessorize, 0171-313 3000. Black leather bag with white handle, £44.95, Klan, Fenwicks, W1; Selfridges, W1 (0171-629 1234) (White floppy hat, £14.99, Accessorize, as before)

SHOES: (from left) Black leather wedge mules, £59.99, Dune, 66-68 High Street Kensington, W8 (0171-795 6336). White patent flat mules, £29.99, Rin Tin Tin, Faith, 74 Oxford Street, W1 (0800 289297). Zebra print mules, £125, Armando Pollini, 35 Brook Street, W1 (0171-629 7606). Flat strappy sandals, £20, Clarks, branches nationwide (0990 785886)

SUNGLASSES: (from top) Black Jackie O frame sunglasses, £119, Fendi, all leading opticians nationwide (01923 249491). White frame sunglasses, £62, Armand Basi, 14 Floral Street, WC2 (0171-278 4843). Black and white sunglasses, £98, Cutler & Gross, 16 Knightsbridge Green, SW1; Harvey Nichols, SW1 *(0171-581 2250)*

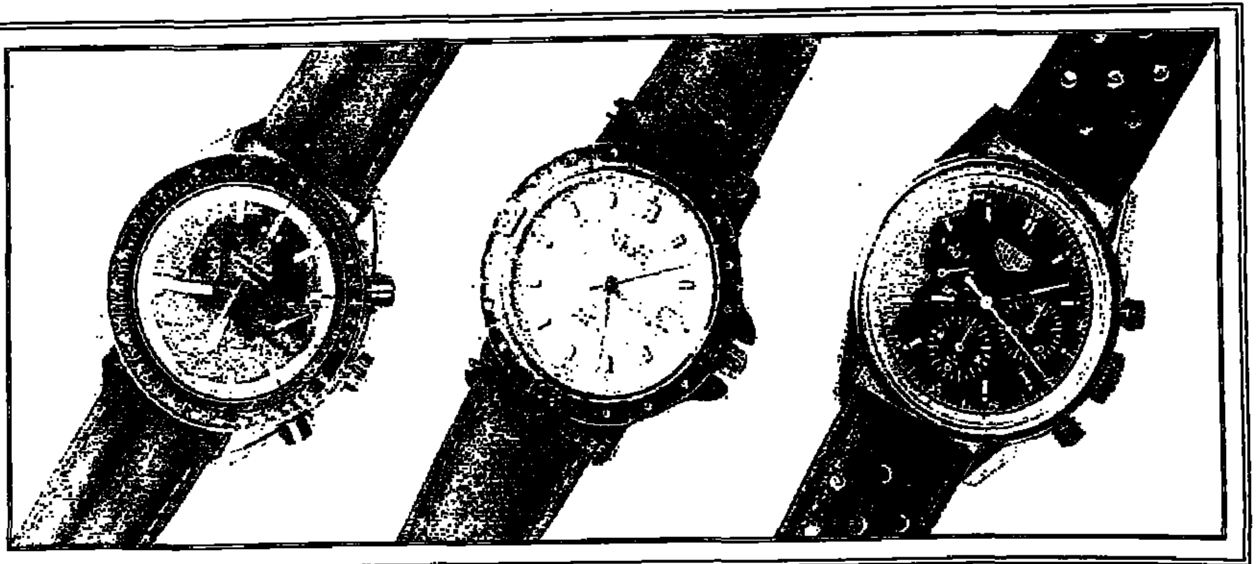
THREE OF A KIND

A GOOD design never goes out of fashion and these three authentic, traditional men's watches are classic examples. H.B.

Red leather strap automatic Speedmaster Racing watch, £950, Omega, Mappin & Webb, 170 Regent Street, London W1; Watches Of Switzerland, 16 New Bond Street, W1 (01703 611612)

Brown leather strap automatic watch, £69 99, Next, branches nationwide (0116-284 9424)

Black punched leather strap Heuer Carrera Limited Edition watch, £1,495, Tag Heuer, Watches Of Switzerland, nationwide (01204 861163)



Jane Owen rounds up the latest information on what's new and what's happening in the gardening world this month

Designer way to go organic

GARDENER'S UPDATE

TRADITIONALLY, organic gardening has not been associated with good design. It appears that what it gains on the high moral ground it loses in looks — the rotting-carpet weed suppressors, the strange combinations of flowers and vegetables.

Now the Henry Doubleday Research Association, very much the top of the organic compost heap, has addressed this prejudice at its gardens at Yalding, Kent, and devised a way for the rest of us to blend our desire for green-ness with chic.

It has brought together 35 garden designers who are expert organic gardeners, including Lady Salisbury, a garden adviser to the Prince of Wales and doyenne of Hatfield House, Hertfordshire, one of the biggest and most beautiful organic gardens in the country, to tackle anything from a window box to a landscape to a structure plan for a municipal park. They will also advise on maintenance and aim to provide ecological solutions using local resources and minimising waste. A plan for a small back garden will cost from £250 to £500, which normally includes a free first site visit.

● *For more information contact Bob Sherman, HDRA Consultants, Ryton Organic Gardens, Coventry CV8 3LG (01203 308219). HDRA Yalding garden, Benover Road, Yalding, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6EX (check opening times on 01622 814650). Hatfield House, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, 01707 262823.*

VICTOR WATTS

Lady Salisbury, in the gardens of Hatfield House, is one of the new organic garden design team

Fine foursome

THE ROYAL Horticultural Society is adding two display gardens to its existing two at Wisley, Surrey, making a permanent display called The Four Ages of Man. The Family Garden and the Garden for the Disabled were installed a couple of years ago. The latest, which will be opened on April 16, are the Garden of Rooms, for professionals coming up to retirement age, and the Homebase Enthusiast's Garden, which will have a pond, paths and trees and a wide range of plants. Agriframes has sponsored the Garden of Rooms, planted with masses of David Austin roses and plants to give subtle colours all year. Whether or not you fit into the categories, the gardens are well worth visiting: they are packed with ideas which can be copied in a multitude of gardens. RHS Garden Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 9QB. Call 01483 224234 for details of opening times and prices.

Seedy discovery

A NEW BOOK is to seed what the RHS *Plant Finder* is to plants. *Seed Search* (published independently by Karen Platt at £8.99) lists more than 33,000 seeds and where to find them. It also gives advice on how best to store, save and grow from seed. The RHS *Plant Finder* is a bible every gardener should have. The latest edition is published on May 22 by Dorling Kindersley at £12.99, and has 70,000 entries, from alpines to trees, suppliers of seeds, orchids, cacti and succulents. The information on the 600 nurseries listed includes opening times, location maps and mail order details. For *Seed Search*, contact Karen Platt, 37 Melbourne Road, Crookes, Sheffield S10 1NR, or the book's distributors, World Leisure Marketing, on 01332 343332.

Summer colour

HARDY ANNUALS suitable for sowing out in April (if you live south of Harrogate) include night-scented stock, sweet peas, larkspur, safflower, Virginian stock, dwarf sunflowers and quaking grass. This will give you early summer colour and a cottage garden effect. For a comprehensive seed list, particularly suitable to conditions in the north, contact Jennifer Lister at the Northern Horticultural Society, Harlow Carr Botanical Gardens, on 01423 565418.

Doctor's delight

DR DAVID HESSAYON's garden manuals, regarded by some as being vulgar, are the top-shelf magazines of the gardening world. This month he will have sold 40 million of his "Garden Expert" series and yet few admit to owning them. It is time to boldly display Dr Hessayon's books on your coffee table, workbench and greenhouse. Eighteen titles cover everything from specific plant groups to garden planning, with diagrams alongside the text should you be in any doubt. New Experts for 1997 include *Rose; Vegetable & Herb; Lawn;* and *Bedding Plant*, all at £5.99, published by Transworld and available from most garden centres and bookshops.

Wiped clean

THE DIRT Trapper Mat does what its name suggests with much greater ease than a conventional doormat. A brisk wipe of the feet will draw nearly all the dirt on to the mat, which can then be tossed into the washing machine when necessary, emerging refreshed and ready to take on the next grubby challenge. A heavier, rubber-backed version, pugnaciously named "Matador", is available for carpeted floors. Brochure listing sizes, colours and prices from the Turtle Mat Company, 92a King's Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT2 5HT (0181-541 0569).

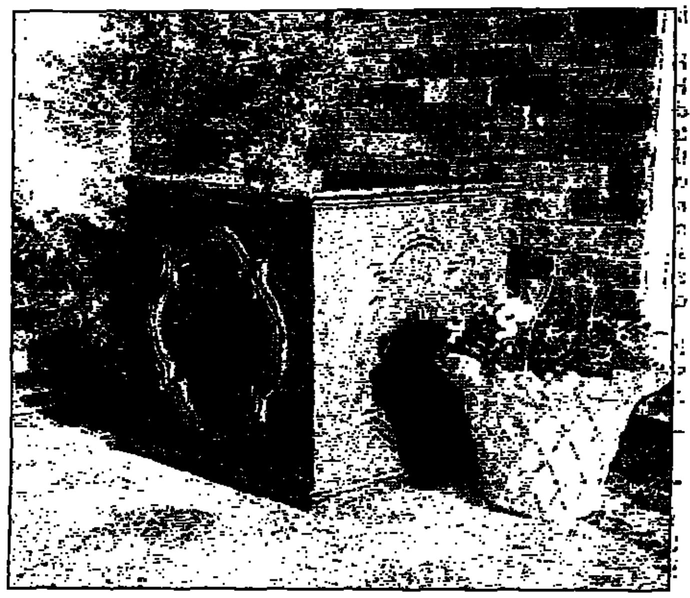
PLANT OF THE MONTH

A NEW CLEMATIS variety, *montana* 'Warwickshire Rose', has abundant, fragrant, shell-pink flowers set off by dark foliage. It is most unusual for new forms to occur naturally, but John Williams, a garden designer, discovered this one sprouting between stone paving near an old conservatory. The seed had fallen from an old specimen of C. *montana*, the stem of which scrambles through an old ash tree. Mr Williams named the new variety in honour of his mother, Rose, and his home county. For supply details, call Highfield Nurseries on 01452 741444.

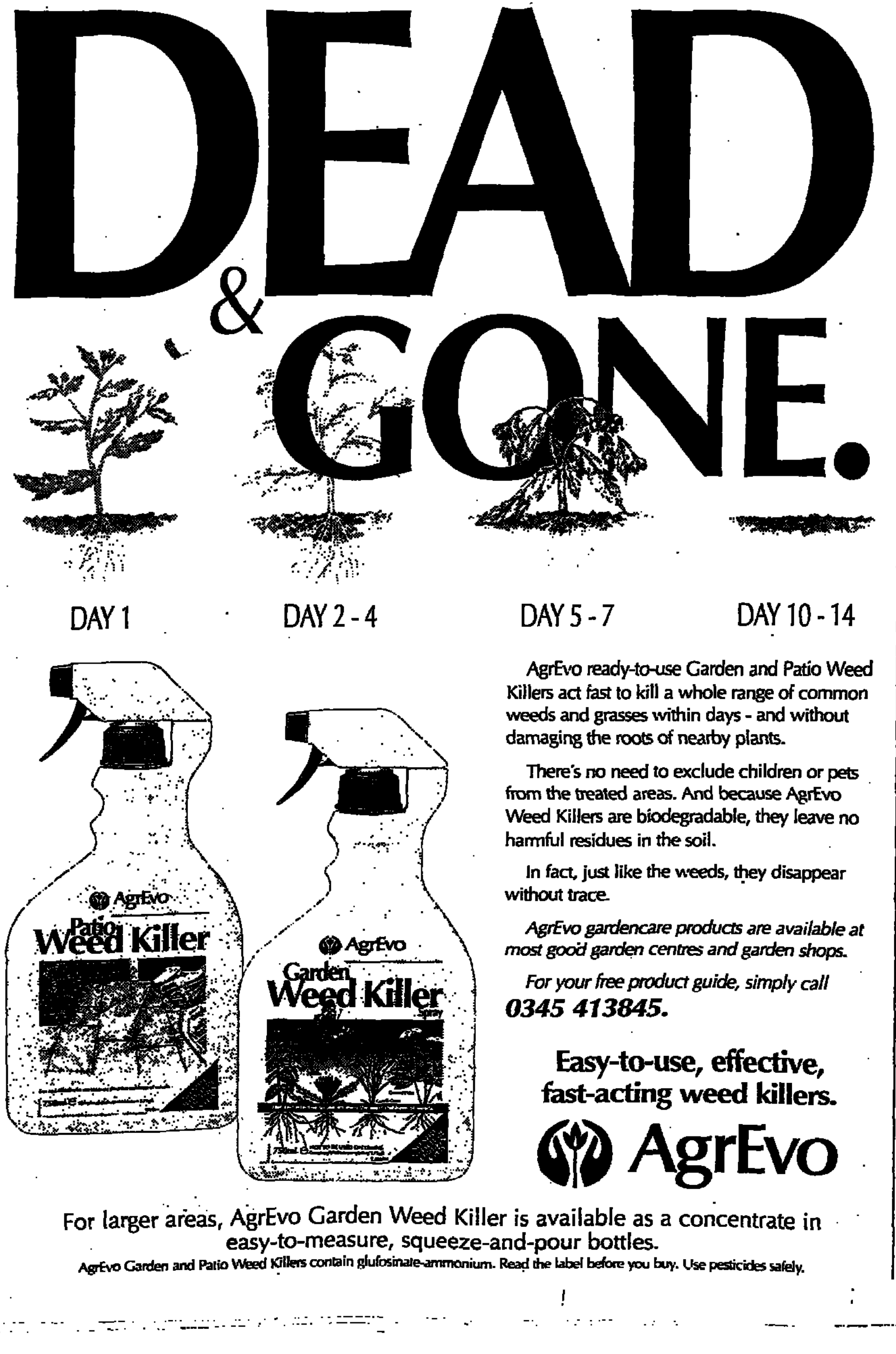
Clematis montana 'Warwickshire Rose'

FIND OF THE MONTH

DEFEAT the drought decoratively and at a discount. If we're to have another summer of dissipating water content then why not collect your rainwater with pride? Capital Garden Products reproduces antique designs for water containers in old bronze, weathered terracotta and *faux* or real lead. For extra concentration, a lid can be provided, or you can gild the lily with a fountain backplate and be soothed by the increasingly uncommon sound of running water. Capital Garden Products usually sells direct to the trade but is offering *Times* readers a special deal on a glass fibre Hampton tank in any finish at £245, including free delivery (usually £298 plus 10 per cent delivery). Matching water spouts, planters, urns, pedestals are optional extras. For details, including your nearest stockist or mail order, call 01580 201092.



Hampton 67-gallon, *faux*-lead tank, 28½in x 28½in x 30in



DEAD & GONE.

DAY 1

DAY 2 - 4

DAY 5 - 7

DAY 10 - 14

AgrEvo ready-to-use Garden and Patio Weed Killers act fast to kill a whole range of common weeds and grasses within days - and without damaging the roots of nearby plants.

There's no need to exclude children or pets from the treated areas. And because AgrEvo Weed Killers are biodegradable, they leave no harmful residues in the soil.

In fact, just like the weeds, they disappear without trace.

AgrEvo gardencare products are available at most good garden centres and garden shops.

For your free product guide, simply call ***0345 413845.***

Easy-to-use, effective, fast-acting weed killers.

AgrEvo

For larger areas, AgrEvo Garden Weed Killer is available as a concentrate in easy-to-measure, squeeze-and-pour bottles.

AgrEvo Garden and Patio Weed Killers contain glufosinate-ammonium. Read the label before you buy. Use pesticides safely.

The way to fresh vegetables without the sauce bottles

Stephen Anderton on the lessons he learnt while clearing and digging out a 12ft by 36ft patch for the essential vegetable garden

Last year I took my own advice and did very little to my new garden. I watched and waited and got to know it. And, with only 8in of rain from January until October in this part of East Anglia, you might say I had little choice. When it is as dry as that, you just concentrate on surviving. But eventually winter came and I got started.

One of the first jobs was to clear a space for a new vegetable patch, which called for an open, sunny area — the sort of place which would be good for any kind of ornamental gardening. But there has to be space for some vegetables: for salads and all those easy things such as French beans and courgettes, which must be fresh, and for globe artichokes and a clump of early rhubarb. And strawberries.

So I have reclaimed a rectangle 12ft by 36ft for the purpose. It is in full sun at the northern side of the garden, against a fence. It will sit formally under the kitchen window, stretching down beside a path to the garden shed. Left of the path, by the fence, will be a new screen of trees and shrubs. Right of the path will be short rows of veg.

All I had to do was clear the ground, which I has done last autumn. I weedkilled the existing lawn with glyphosate and dug out of it, stump and all, a moribund old apple tree and the daffodils underneath. From the shrubbery-to-be I removed an elder and three of leyland cypresses.

The cypresses might have stayed. They gave privacy and shelter from the north, but their roots would have been perpetually drawing on the vegetable patch. And, anyway, they become vast and dreary in a small garden. Better to get them out.

In the process, it was especially pleasing to learn that the long, straight, vertical branches of leylandii, shorn of their twigs, make excellent rollers for moving a Wendy house off a proposed vegetable patch.

Squirrels we know bury nuts. But what is this human thing about sauce bottles? Wherever I garden in this country, there is always a place where someone has buried shards of old china and sauce bottles. My veg patch was full of them, and I think I know why. The convenient old concrete path, which I intended to be the spine of the veg patch, used to be the central path of a lost greenhouse. And wherever Victorian (or in this case Edwardian) man made foundations, he buried his junk. It is now my privilege to have to dig out a total of several square yards of brick and concrete and broken and unbroken bottles. I could have given up and smothered the lot with shrubbery. But in a small garden, and in this one in particular, there is only one convenient place for the vegetable patch.

DENZIL McNEELANCE

Stephen Anderton at work on his new vegetable patch

But what to do with all that spoil? I could have hired a skip, but in these days of landfill tax it is no longer a cheap option. I would rather spend £60 on covering plants. So I buried the rubble. The glass I put in the bin, because it goes against the gardening grain ever to bury glass in a garden.

Then I dug deep holes wherever I intended to have new paths — across the top of the veg patch, under the intended new steps down from the terrace, and under the site of the relocated Wendy house.

I used the excess soil to level the ground from which I had removed volumes of rubble, and gradually, by moving A to C, and B to A, and C to B, I reached my vegetable base camp: soil where soil should be and rubble where paths should be. And no trees.

The next job will be to dig over the ground properly, by double digging: to take off the top spadeful of soil and incorporate some good, old manure into the next layer down.

Spring is rather late for the job — it would have been better done in November — but beggars cannot be choosers. In November I was still digging out leylandii, and hosting a *Times* gardening cruise to the Canaries. As it happens, Bert, whom I met on the cruise and who lives just a few miles away, will supply me with a load or two of muck in return for a lecture at his local horticultural society show. Well it all makes the world go round, doesn't it?

Some separation will be needed to screen the vegetable patch from the main garden, which is relatively formal and relates squarely to another face of the house. So I have decided to run a 3ft-tall hedge down the southern side of the area, to end in my topiarised yew tree, which is now making a globe 9ft high.

I might have used yew for the new hedge, but mine is not a grand garden and, for a low hedge in a country garden, box has a quiet dignity, and gloss, and a softness which you never quite find in yew.

There is an upright form of box, *Buxus sempervirens* 'Handsworthiensis', which will give me a fast, smart and narrow screen. So in February I had a day trip to Langley Boxwood Nursery, at Liss, Hampshire, to collect a carload of 36 stocky 1ft-high plants.

The rear view in the car was nothing but greenery, and the powerful sweet-sour boxy smell a glorious promise of things to come at home.

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A topiary castle fit for a queen

Stephen Anderton

on the careful nuturing of semi-mature trees

DENZIL McNEELANCE

Penelope Hobhouse monitors the planting of 20-year-old trees in the Queen Mother's Garden at Walmer Castle in Kent

Have you ever bought something at a charity plant sale only to find it had been stuffed into the pot only a couple of days beforehand and all the soil falls off? It happens.

Before you buy, it may be some comfort, then, to know what happens to the semi-mature trees costing between £100 and several thousand pounds. In fact, it is the work involved in caring for them that makes them expensive.

It is a bit like buying an oven-ready turkey: the tree must be absolutely ready to go into the ground. The rootball should be just filling the pot — if I can call something the size of a dustbin a pot — but not pot-bound. The best containerised trees will not have spent years being endlessly potted on, but will have grown in a nursery in the open ground for as many as ten to 15 years, having the top carefully shaped and the roots regularly pruned and undercut to keep them bushy.

When the time comes for containerisation, the trees are lifted by machine and potted up in a container which the roots will fill over the next 12 to 18 months. A good grower will aim to sell on those trees in that first or second season, when the roots have grown out to grip all the soil in the pot but before they start to spiral and become pot-bound.

Moving a container holding 200 to 300 litres of compost as well as an enormous multi-stem tree is no easy task. Fork-lifts and heavy machinery are required both to move the trees to their standing ground and also to install them at planting time.

At Walmer Castle in Kent, English Heritage has asked Penelope Hobhouse and Simon Johnson to design a garden for Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who is Warden of the Cinque Ports. It lies within a 19th-century walled garden, and this month has seen the lifting in of many mature limes and yews to form the structure of the garden. Well, at the age of 96 it is worth paying for a quick effect, isn't it?

The seven-metre, broad-leaved limes were individually selected for shape in Holland more than a year ago, and are being planted with a large rootball but without having been containerised. They will be given invisible, underground guys to ensure that they stay upright.

Also being installed are plants for a long yew hedge and a three-metre topiary castle of yew. Tendercare, the suppliers, has been growing the castle for the past year in a corner of its nursery, ensuring that the roots are ready for a quick getaway when they are planted on the new raised turf mound. They have also begun the formative clipping of the yews, training them to form the three dense arches and castellations of the castle. The jigsaw was disassembled for transport and reassembled after negotiating the garden wall.

On an instant box parterre, Tendercare has also been growing the shape of two Es (for Elizabeth). The hedging has been planted in dozens of wire troughs, clipped and fed hard throughout the past season. It was protected from frost with horticultural fleece and is ready for slotting into place this spring.

After installation, the care of all this expensive planting becomes the daunting responsibility of the new head gardener, Richard Squires. But how does anyone look after the watering of acres of containerised trees in a nursery?

At Tendercare, 90 per cent of all the containers are on drip-pegs, which deliver a correct amount of water to the surface of the pot. Where watering is by sprinkler, the excess is recycled from the sloping standing grounds. But here is the clever bit: the water supply to the drip-pegs includes a gentle liquid feed to ensure that every inch of growth is made. In spring the feed is high in nitrogen to induce a strong leaf and shoots. But in autumn the balance tips towards potash to slow down and ripen growth. In spring the plants, particularly evergreens, are given a seaweed-based liquid feed as well.

Constant feeding really does pay off, and it is a treat to see the great tubs of gunnera and phormium and ferns ready to make instant foliage gardens, or rows of pre-formed espalier apples, pears and plums ready to dress a tall wall.

Is it worth a gardener investing in this kind of expensive planting? On occasion I think the answer is yes. The purchase of just one big specimen tree can add enormous maturity to a new garden. When everything else is small and low and new, it lifts the eye and calms the scene.

And the transplanting of mature trees is nothing new. The grand Victorian landscape gardeners took great pride in it. Then it went out of fashion for 100 years. Now, again, it is readily available, and with the assistance of modern technology and machinery, it is easier then ever.

Gardeners on exposed sites should continue to plant small for greatest success, but for impact in a normally sheltered garden, it can be well worth spending £100 on a big specimen tree. You are not just buying a tree and someone's work on it; you are buying time, which cannot be priced. Just remember when you go on holiday, that whoever cuts your lawn must also water the tree in its first year.

● *Tendercare, Southlands Road, Denham, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB9 4HD (01895 835544).*

Meet Penelope Hobhouse and Tim Smit, page 14

WEEKEND TIPS

- ■ Prepare to spray outbreaks of aphids on greenhouse plants as the weather warms up.
- ■ Clip summer-flowering heathers as the new shoots begin to grow.
- ■ Plant potatoes, starting with the earliest varieties.
- ■ Plant gladioli 6in deep, and set them on sand in heavy soils.
- ■ Protect wall blossom and early-flowering shrubs against sudden night frost with netting or fleece.
- ■ Pot some roots of mint for early growth on a windowsill.

GARDEN ANSWERS

STEPHEN ANDERTON

replies to readers' letters

Q I have dug over two 10ft x 10ft plots where I used to keep hives. I would now like to establish wildflower areas. Can you suggest where I might buy a suitable seed mixture to save me buying individual packets of wildflowers from a garden centre? The soil is chalky and south-facing. — M. Kendall, Ramsbury, Wiltshire.

A Wildflower meadows take time to establish. Seed mixtures selected for particular soil types include showy annuals such as poppies for the first year, but they are flowers of cultivated land and do not persist in turf. The longer-term wildflowers take a few years to establish. Also, if the soil is rich, coarse self-sown grasses dominate at the expense of wildflowers and the lighter grasses in the seed mix. In small areas like this, I would be inclined to add plugs or plantlets of perennial wildflowers as well as seed. The results will be faster. Contact John Chambers' Wild Flower Seeds, 15 Westleigh Road, Barton Seagrave, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 5AJ (01933 652562).

Q I would love to have in the garden one or two of those slender "finger" cypresses which are such an attractive feature of the Italian landscape. Five years ago I was given a cone full of seeds but none germinated. Will they grow here, and could I buy one? I think I have seen them in the south of the country once or twice. — J. Lefley, Stanmore, Hampshire.

A *Cypressus sempervirens* 'Stricta' is the plant. It is seriously under threat from disease in the Mediterranean now. It will indeed grow in favoured gardens in the south of England. It is only just hardy, and some forms are more successful than others, so it is worth going to a reliable nursery. *The Plant Finder* lists 13 suppliers, including Scotts Nurseries, Meriott, Somerset TA16 5PL (01460 72306).

Hardier alternatives, if less slender, might be the incense cedar *Calocedrus decurrens*, or a form of Lawson cypress called 'Wisselii', which is a dark-bluish green. . Don't be fobbed off with pencil junipers such as 'Skyrocket', which are only shrubs.

Q Have you any suggestions for dealing with dog mess in the garden? It decomposes very slowly on the grass cuttings heap. Is there a product to speed up this process? — S. Cox, Axbridge, Somerset.

A It is not a good idea to add dog excrement to compost heaps. It can contain organisms leading to toxicariasis, which may cause blindness in children. My preference is to dig the occasional hole in some rooty, ungardened corner under trees, and put it there, where it can rot away in contact with no one.

● *Readers should write to: Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. The Times regrets that any enclosures cannot be returned.*

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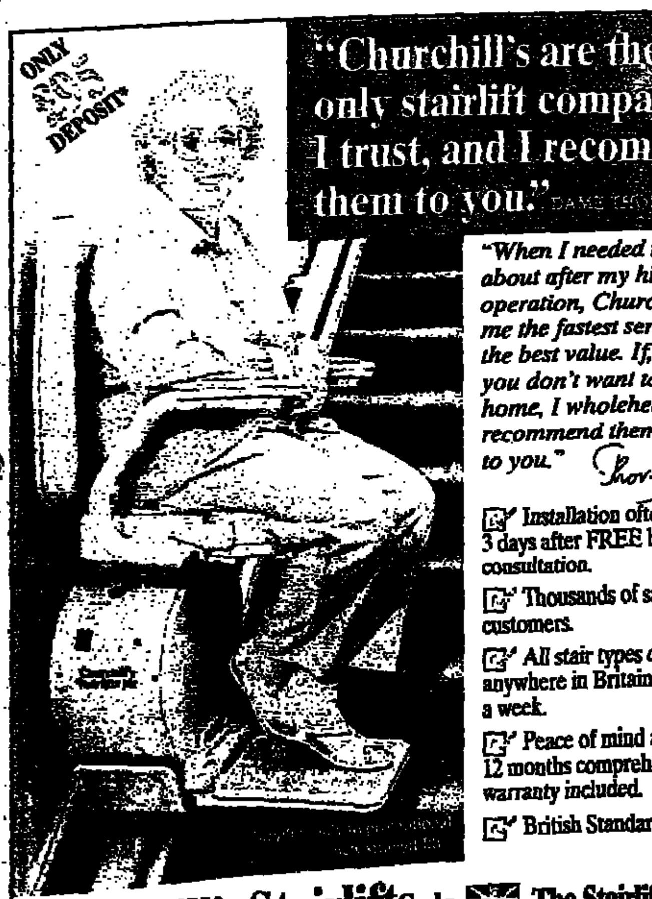

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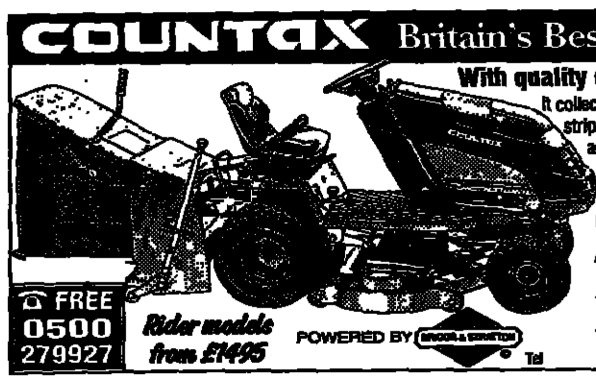

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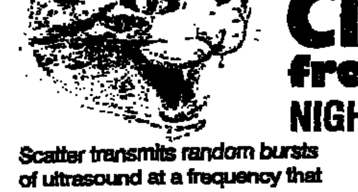

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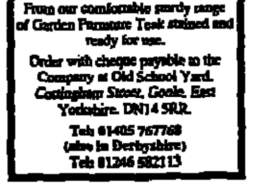

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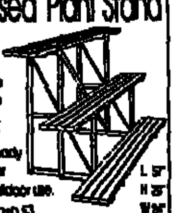

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Cream of Cornish gardens

COUNTRY LIFE

Bampton Manor opens its gardens once a year for charity when they are at their spring peak

■ Cotehele, St Dominick, near Saltash, Cornwall (01579 350434)

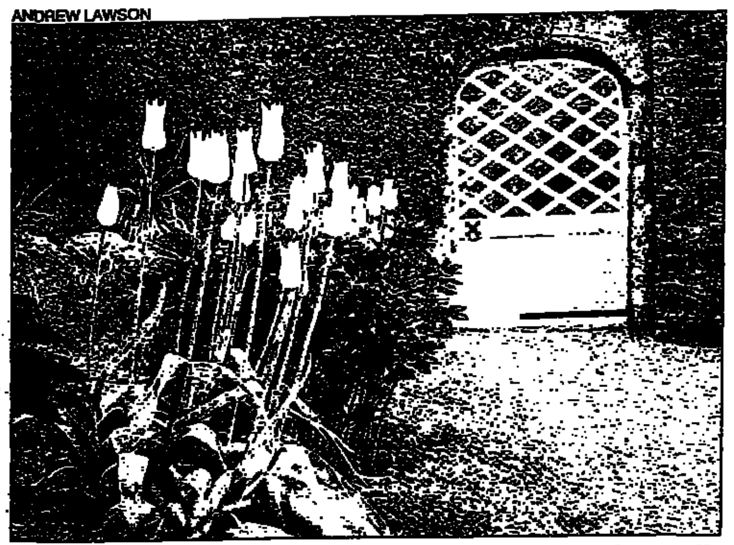
Eight miles southwest of Tavistock. Open daily, 11am-dusk. £2.80, family ticket £7

THIS magical National Trust property is nestled into the western banks of the Tamar river, which marks the boundary between Devon and Cornwall. Large herbaceous borders trace the length of each of the terraces leading down from the 15th-century manor.

As you walk down the steps running centrally through this formal area to what is apparently the final terrace overlooking a sweep of countryside, look out for a small, inconspicuous tunnel which leads under part of the garden to an informal, sheltered valley with a fish pond at its head and a grey stone, dome-shaped dovecote.

In typically fecund Cornish style the valley vegetation is huge and seemingly only just being kept under control: ferns sprout out of walls and trees, moss and lichen cling to every surface and hostas and primulas thrive. There are palms, acres, hydrangeas and betulas, and the massive jungle-like leaves of gunnera beside the stream. You should just be in time to see the last of the magnificent magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons in flower.

There are ten acres to explore and then the paths criss-cross down to the 19th-century quay beside the Tamar. This is an ideal place to have a picnic and look over the outstation of the National Maritime Museum.



ANDREW LAWSON

Cotehele is a magical garden near the Tamar river in Cornwall

OPEN THIS WEEKEND

■ Glenwhan Garden, Dunragit by Stranraer, Wigtownshire, Dumfries and Galloway (01581 400222)

Seven miles east of Stranraer, one mile off the A75. Open daily, 10am-5pm. £2, children £1.50

THIS IS regarded as one of Scotland's important gardens although it was only started in 1979 by the Knott family. When they began work the area was rigid with gorse and bracken, but it has the great advantage of the Gulf Stream to keep the climate mild and make it a virtually frost-free pocket. By now the primula arena should be at its best, and the rhododendrons are providing colour. Since last year a lot of the vegetation has been hacked back to give new vistas across Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, and to make a new woodland walk.

At the centre of the gardens is a large informal pool which can be traced by the rushing stream that feeds it. A causeway crosses the pool and gives a better look at the packed planting, some of it unusual, around the perimeter. The Knotts' nursery, which is attached to the gardens, is well-stocked with plants and very tempting.

■ Bampton Manor and Weald Manor Gardens, Oxfordshire (01993 850224)

On A4095 Witney-Faringdon road. Open April 6, 2-5.30pm. £1.50 for combined ticket to see both private gardens, which open once a year for charity

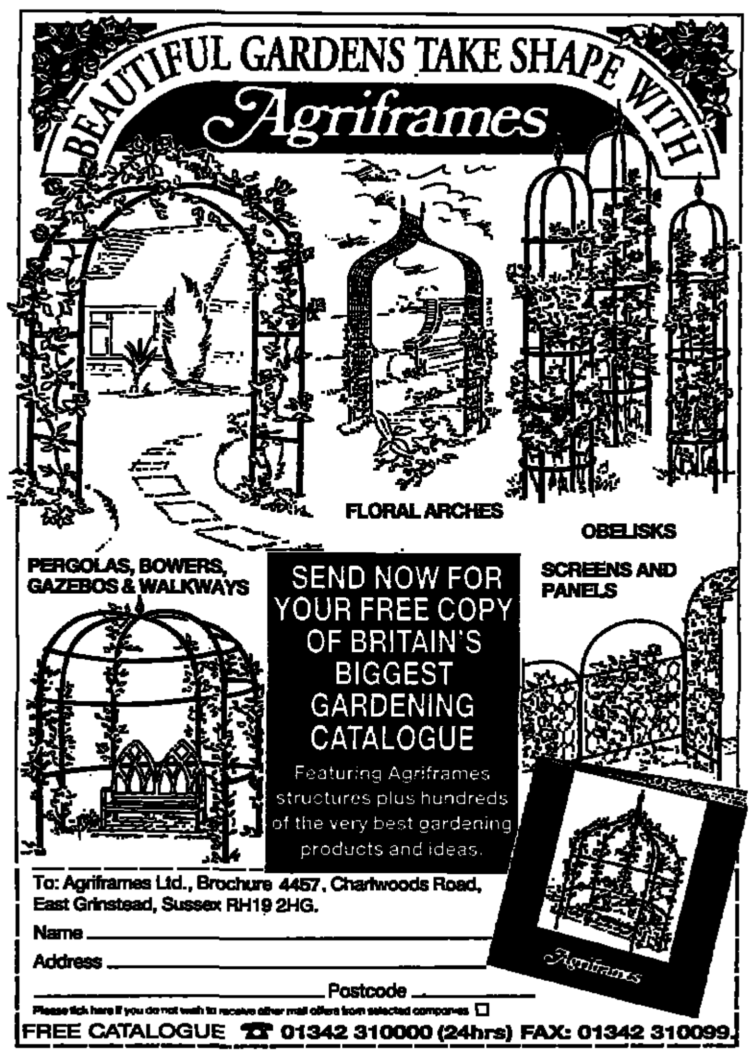
WEALD MANOR is a three-acre garden with a small wood and lake. There is a mass of spring bulbs, a few fritillaries and some topiary. The owners modestly maintain that the main point of visiting the garden is for the teas, which annually raise a great deal of money for the National Gardens Scheme. Bampton Manor, a small chunk of this garden, was owned until her death 15 years ago by the gardener Peggy Munster. The bulk of the building is Georgian and it has inspired the Department of the Environment to list the brick and flint walls.

The garden opens once a year for charity at the moment when the spring garden should be at its peak, with daffodils, blue wood anemones, dwarf tulips and hyacinths. In the rest of the four acres there are cream, pink and white prunus, a mass of hellebores, crown imperials and two ponds — one a circular stone with a fountain at the centre, the other informal.

Yew and stone boundaries separate one part of the garden from the next, structural work which stands as a memorial to Peggy Munster.

The gardens are open by appointment at other times of year.

JANE OWEN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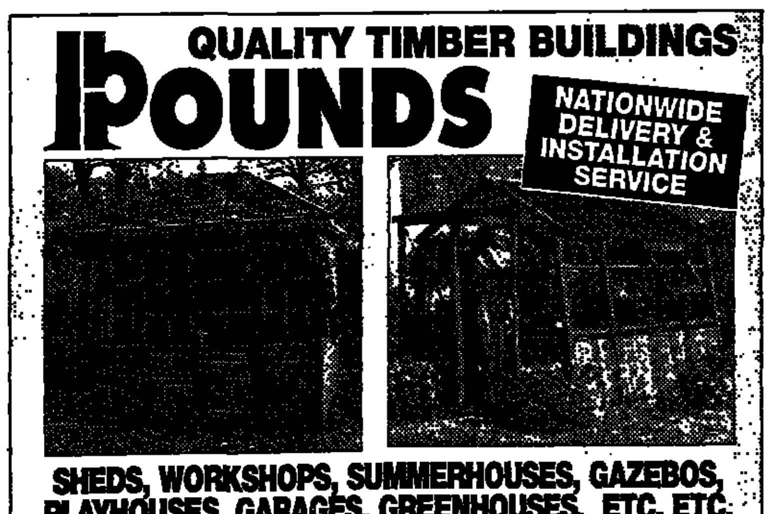
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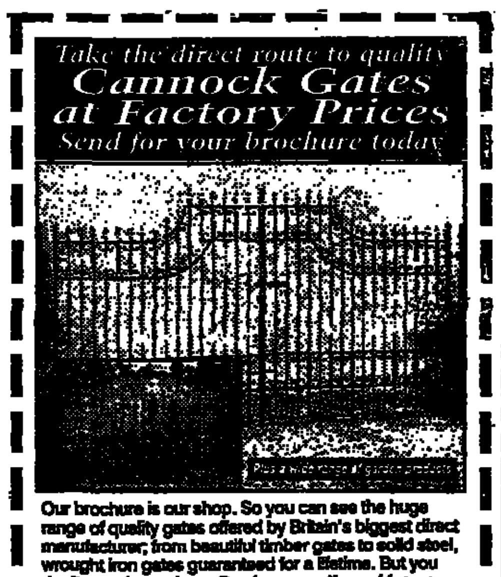
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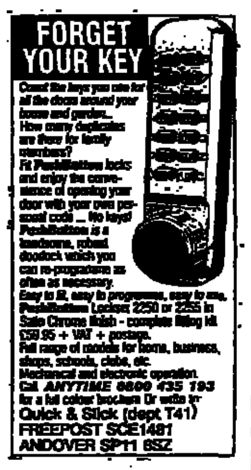
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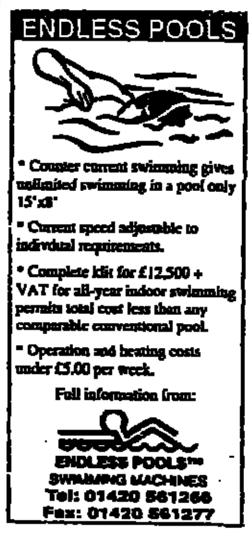
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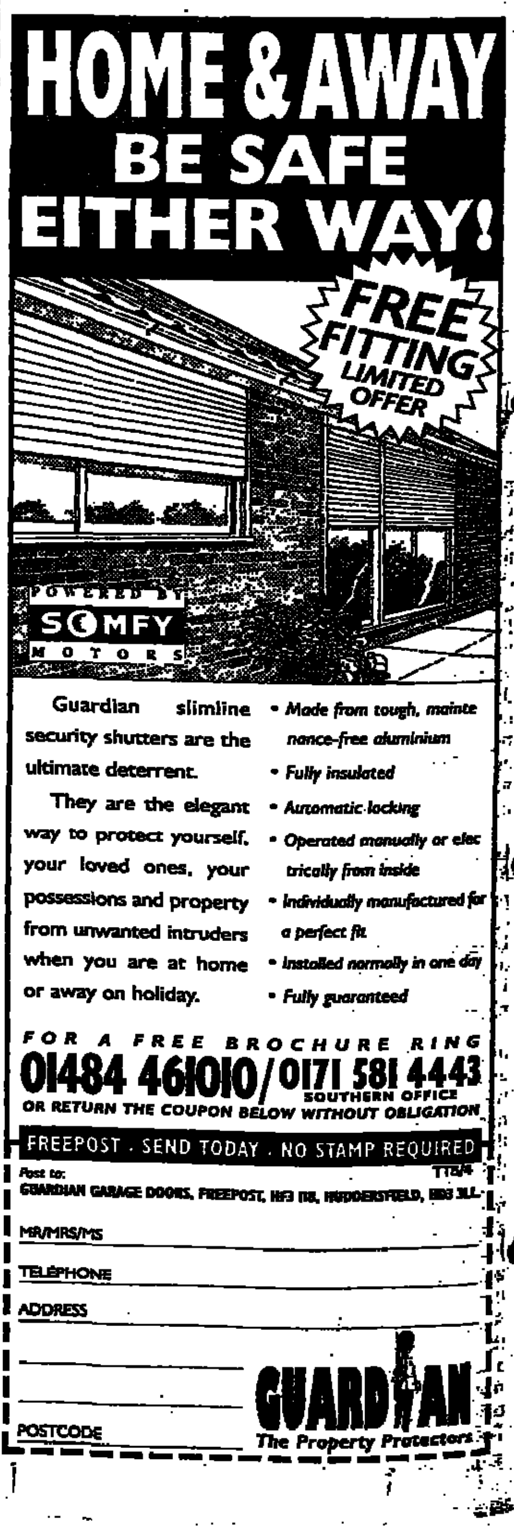
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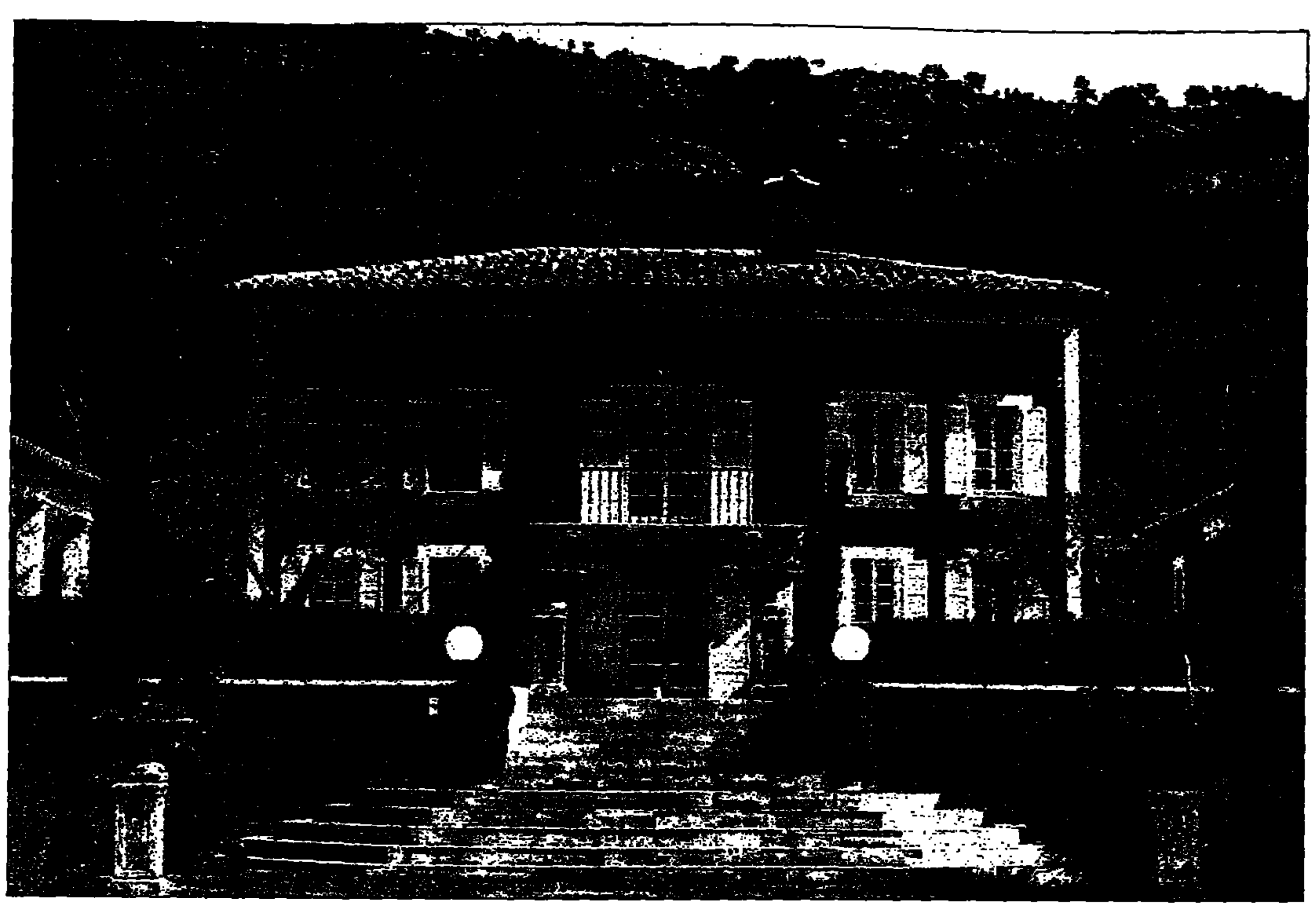
Falling prices and a strong pound are attracting British buyers to French property. **Cheryl Taylor** on finding the bargains

Three-bedroom stone-built house in the village of Najac, Aveyron, for sale at £63,000


This country house in the hills behind St Tropez was on sale at £1.1 million in 1994 but with the improved exchange rate recently sold for just £750,000

Homes with a continental drift

The *strength of the pound* against the French franc — having gained 17 per cent in value over the past six *months* — and the *recession in the* French domestic housing market have encouraged British buyers to look *again at property across the* Channel.

Unlike the UK housing market, which *has* improved over the past two years, the French market is still in the doldrums, prices having fallen in some areas by 30-40 per *cent since 1990. Agents say prices in* France have now bottomed out and buyers are returning, but there is no rush to buy and purchasers are *more discerning.*

Paddy Dring of Knight Frank's international department, which *handles properties for sale in* Provence and the French Alps, says: "Until recently, the strength of the franc continued to deter British buyers, but the tables have been turned. Low prices combined with a strong pound have suddenly *made French property an attractive* and affordable proposition."

There have been dramatic price reductions in **Provence**, *although* property here is still "over-ripe". Knight Frank has recently sold a palatial country house with 7.5 acres in the hills behind St Tropez. When it came on the market in 1994 at Fr9 million, it would have cost *£1.1 million*. The price was reduced to Fr6.5 million last summer, which at the time was worth £860,000. Now, with the improved exchange rate, it is £750,000 — a drop of more than a third.

There are bargains too in the **Dordogne**, where there are now so many Britons with second homes that the French call it "Little *England*". A *restored* five-bedroom house, with an attached holiday cottage, barn, garage and walled *garden, in a village in the northeast* of the Dordogne was on the books of the French Property Shop a year ago at Fr1 million, then costing £133,000. Now it is priced at Fr750,000, about £81,000.

In the south of France, British *purchasers priced out* of Provence are moving westwards to **Languedoc Roussillon** in search of better value. The area around Perpignan *is the poor man's riviera, with a* Mediterranean coastline and a rash of new resorts aimed at low-*budget French tourists. However,* its rugged hinterland is scattered with pretty hilltop villages and some lovely old houses for less than £50,000.

The weather is hot and dry in summer and property prices are *much cheaper than on the Côte* d'Azur. A habitable two-bedroom cottage in hilltop village, near *Prades, a 45-minute drive* from the sea, costs about £35,000. A four-bedroom stone-built farmhouse in good condition, with fine views and a *swimming* pool, will fetch about £120,000.

There is growing interest too in *the* **Aude Valley**, *the southernmost* part of Languedoc, inland from Narbonne, with its famous vineyards, *feudal castles and fortified* cities. Rustic properties are now in short supply, but you might find an old stone house from £50,000. But avoid homes without water and electricity; installation of essential services can cost a fortune here.

Nigel Paige *of Authentic France* reports a brisk trade in village houses further east in the **Herault**, *around Pezenas*, a 30-minute drive from the sea. Clustered around a square, a church and a boules pitch, houses cost about £25,000 for *anything that is habitable*. They usually lack any type of garden, but often have beautiful views from upper terraces. *A six-bedroom maison viticulteur* (winegrower's house) can be bought for £50,000 to £100,000.

Many Britons are looking to settle permanently in France, often with a view to retirement, particularly in *the southwest, where the* houses are bigger, the weather is warmer and property more reasonably priced.

According to Sarah Francis of French property specialist Sifex, leisure is an increasingly important factor for many British buyers. Well-located properties in areas such as the Gers, the Lot, the Lot et Garonne, the Aveyron and the Tarn, within a two-hour drive of the Atlantic coast and winter skiing in the Pyrenees, are sought after and harder to find, she says.

South of the Dordogne, the **Lot** is hotter and drier, with a more arid landscape and a number of modest *rural dwellings priced from* £50,000. An old village house for modernisation in one of the medieval hilltop villages would cost *from £50,000; the restored version* from £80,000.

A huge white-stone farmhouse *for conversion, with enough land to* graze a few horses, can be found for £70,000 near Cahors, an area famous for its *full-bodied* red wines. Converted and modernised, these fetch from £130,000 with a swimming pool.

Prices slip further east in the **Lot et Garonne**, where a restored five-bedroom house in a village near *Montaigu de Quercy* is on offer at £57,000 through the French Property Shop.

South of the Lot, the sunflower-filled *département* of the **Tarn**, between the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, is off the tourist track and *prices are low. Stone-built cottages,* farmbuildings and village houses *around Gaillac or Albi, about a* 45-minute drive from Toulouse, can be found for a fraction of the price of those in Provence.

The stock of rural dwellings has diminished as more buyers move to *the* Tarn in search of better value, but you can still pick up a small village house from £30,000. For £50,000 you can buy a habitable *three-bedroom cottage with a* garden. A restored country house, with up to five bedrooms and land *around, costs about £150,000.*

The **Aveyron** is a sparsely populated mountainous *département* on the edge of the southwest, about a *two-hour drive* from Toulouse airport, or ten hours from Calais. Situated between the Lot and the *Tarn, it is green and fertile, criss*-crossed by rivers and full of lakes. It has an historic capital in Rodez, ancient walled towns and villages, dramatic gorges and the limestone caves where Roquefort cheese is ripened.

Despite its many attractions, the Aveyron tends to be ignored by British property buyers and prices are low. *There is a good range of* property from stone cottages and farmbuildings to large country houses with *outbuildings and* sizeable acreages.

You can buy a large stone farmhouse with a rambling old barn and a well, *but without mains* water or electricity, from £25,000. Restored with converted outbuild*ings and a swimming pool, the* same property might fetch £80,000. A renovated two or three-bedroom village house, with a garden, costs about £40,000.

Further west, the **Gers**, close to the foothills of the Pyreneees and famous *for its* fois gras and fiery Armagnac brandy, continues to attract British buyers in search of large Gascon-style country houses, stone-built with wooden shutters, in good condition for under £120,000.

Now there is renewed interest in the **Pas de Calais**, particularly the area south of Boulogne, which has a rolling green landscape scattered with picturesque *river valleys* and some delightful wooded areas.

You could find a number of *pretty villages and some interesting* old towns, including Hesdin, Samer and the walled city of *Montreuil-sur-Mer, with its* cobbled streets and medieval ramparts. This was the boom area of the late 1980s; conveniently placed *for a quick hop* to France, the area seemed ideal for a weekend retreat and many British buyers paid over-*the-odds for tumbledown* properties which cost too much to restore. Property prices, which slumped following the recession in the UK, have been slow to recover.

Maggie Kelly of the English-owned estate agency L'Abritan*ique, based in Hesdin, reports* increased interest from British buyers: "With return ferry *crossings from only £17, an* improved exchange rate and low property prices, the Pas de Calais is enjoying a revival. These days, *however, buyers are reluctant to* take on ruins, preferring something ready to move into," she says.

On *the books* of *L'Abritanique*, near Montreuil-sur-Mer, is a detached 19th-century house in pristine condition, with three bedrooms, large *restored barn and* a garden, a 45-minute drive from the Channel Tunnel terminus, on offer *at £70,000*. There is also a *renovated* two-up-two down character cottage at £30,000.

Prices in the **Pays Dauge** region in classic Normandy countryside beyond Rouen and south of Lisieux to Alencon have fallen 25 per cent *since* 1990, says Vivienne Bridge of North and West France Properties.

A traditional half-timbered farm*house in good condition, with four* bedrooms and an acre of land, will set you back about £110,000. About *£250,000 buys a small* château with up to five acres.

Prices drop south and west in the **Orne** region of lower Normandy, *about a 90-minute drive from the* ferry port of Caen (Ouistreham), where you can still find a habitable *two-bedroom village house with* a garden for £25,000, or a restored three-bedroom farmhouse for £40,000.

It is *important* to take independent legal advice when buying or selling property in France. Any *money* in the form of a deposit or sale proceeds should be paid to the *notaire* in France or, in the case of a *sterling transaction, to* an English solicitor, in a client account held as stakeholder.

GOING **FRENCH**

■ ***British-based solicitors who*** **specialise in French conveyancing: Anthony Wilkin of Thrings & Long, Bath (01225 448494); Stephen Smith of Prettys, Ipswich (01473 232121); Sally Osborne of Russell-Cooke, Potter and Chapman, London (0181-789 9111).**

■ **Agents: Authentic France, 01258 821372; North and West France Properties, 0171-386 9826; Knight Frank, 0171-629 8171; French Property Shop, 01892** ***852449; Sifex 0171-384 1200;*** **L Abritanique, Hesdin, 00 33 321 815 979; Proprietes Roussillon, 0121-459 9058.**

Paris by numbers

When buying in the capital make sure you choose the right postcode

With Paris *just* three hours from London by Eurostar, more British buyers are taking advantage of the strong pound to buy or rent a pied-à-terre in the French capital, where architectural gems can be found around every corner, and the Parisians cluster together in *huge apartment* blocks of varying elegance and dilapidation. Because the majority of homes in Paris are *privately* rented, investors in particular are keen to seek out properties to buy and subsequently rent out.

Although the property market in Paris has been in decline for the past *six* years, with prices having slumped 30 per cent, as elsewhere in France, Leonard Weil, a Parisian buying *agent for Hamptons* in the UK, reports that the market is picking up.

Naturally the price of a flat depends *on its* location, size and condition. Prices are worked out according to the number of square metres and the price *per square metre* for the area, ranging from about Fr15,000 (£1,670) per square metre to Fr40,000 (£4,460) for a top-notch flat.

Annual rental values for a good quality flat range between Fr1,000 (£110) per square metre *and* Fr1,200 (£135) per square metre. Hence a smart two-bedroom flat in a restored period building in the centre of Paris will cost around Fr8,000 (£890) a month for 100 square metres, while a studio *suitable for a pied-à-terre* will range from Fr4,000 (£445) a month for 30 square metres.

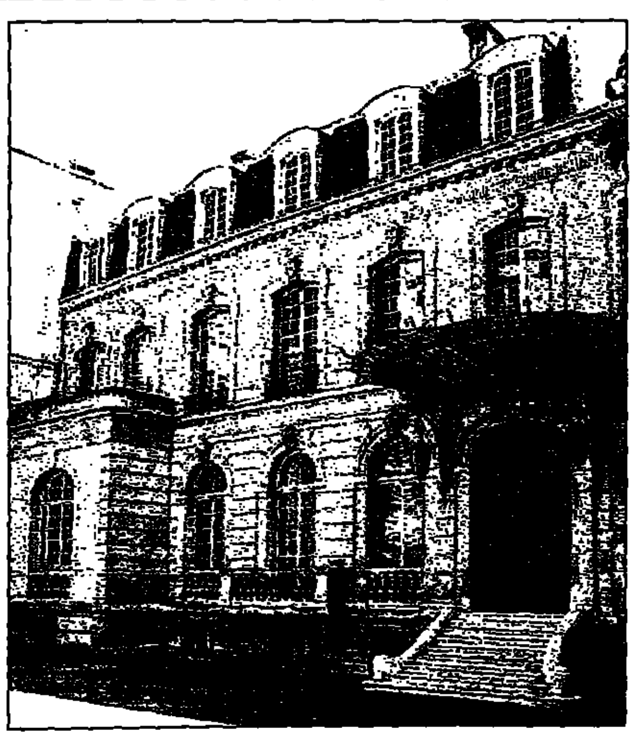
Descriptions of French properties specify the number of rooms in the living area, *rather than indicating how* many bedrooms, so a two-bedroom apartment with a reception room will be referred to as *trois pièces*, plus kitchen and bathroom.

Paris is divided into 20 *arrondissements*, each with more of a distinctive flavour than a London postcode. Pari*sians tend to refer* to a flat in the 6th or 7th (the Left Bank, near the Eiffel Tower), or the 8th (the Right Bank *near the* Champs Elysées) with no other explanation necessary.

The 16th, on the Right Bank, *in the west of the city* near the Bois de Boulogne, is a fashionable area, with its wide tree-*lined* avenues of 19th-century belle epoque buildings.

A two-bedroom flat — *trois pièces* — plus kitchen and bath in an imposing *hôtel particulier* (town house) in the Avenue Foche, built in grand style, with high-ceilinged rooms and French windows, will cost at least £300,000.

Le Bastille, the up-and-coming 11th *arrondissement* on the Right Bank, is the *Parisian equivalent of* Islington, where you can pick up an apartment in an old character building from £150,000 *for 70 square metres*. Similarly, Le Marais, an old aristocratic quarter of the 3rd and 4th, is enjoying a renaissance. Its *renovated 17th* and 18th-century mansions are *being converted* into trendy apartments for artists and media folk, who pay anything from *£180,000 for a two*-bedroom flat.


Town house near the Trocadero, Paris on sale at £2.5 million

On the Left Bank, a flat in the centre of town, in the 5th, 6th and 7th, near Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower, is the most *expensive option, costing* between £300,000 and £500,000 for two bedrooms.

The cheapest areas of central Paris, *to the north* and east, are traditionally those with a large immigrant population. A small flat on the top *floor of an old block, without* a lift, in less salubrious Pigalle in the 18th will cost at least £80,000 for anything that is *habitable*.

Most Parisians want to live at second-floor level for a better view, more light and less noise, ideally, *entre cour et jardin* — overlooking a courtyard and a garden. You might get a better deal on a ground-floor flat or at the top *of building without a lift*.

As far as condition goes, elegant staircases, marble fireplaces and ornate ceilings are all very fine, but ballroom-sized bedrooms can cost a fortune to heat, and French plumbing *and wiring can* leave a lot to be desired. To avoid the massive rush-hour traffic jams, make sure there is a Metro station nearby.

The leasehold system does not exist in France, where all property, including flats, are owned *freehold. Flat owners* are jointly responsible for the common parts of the building and decisions about maintenance *and repairs* are taken collectively by the residents. If you are planning to buy a flat it is important to check your *share of these maintenance* costs before you sign the *compromise du vente* (sale contract).

Paris-based agents Phillip and Patricia Hawkes operate at the top end of the market — *properties worth more* than £300,000. Leonard Weil, who operates a buyer's service for *Hamptons clients spending* more than £160,000, will search for the Parsian property *of your dreams*, and *negotiate* on your behalf. His fees are included in the asking price. Buyers pay 9 per *cent of the* purchase price for notary fees and taxes.

Houses with gardens are rare in the city centre and change hands for fortunes — at least £2 million. Those who *wish to* own a home of their own, with a garden, usually move out to the leafy suburbs around Neuilly, Maisons Lafitte and Versailles, where property prices are more reasonable. *Something old and* interesting in such sought-after areas will still be about 15 *to 20 per cent less than central* Paris.

About 13 miles south of Paris, a *17th-century pavillon* with a contemporary outbuilding, orangery and guardian lodge, in 12 acres of walled *formal gardens, is on offer at* £833,000. It comes with nine bedrooms, five bathrooms, period panelling, original fireplaces and a wine cellar. A hypermarket next door is a drawback, Ms Hawkes says, *but it is a lot of house for the* money.

There are many small firms of estate agents in Paris but, because most owners who wish to sell advertise the property themselves, prospective buyers should study the *small ads in the French daily* newspaper *Figaro* and specialist magazines, such as *Particuliers*.

C.T.

● *Hamptons, 0171-824 8822; Phillip and Patricia Hawkes 00 33 142 681 111; Leonard Weil 00 33 140 581 135.*

Renovation the French way

RENOVATING a *house* is a gruelling business, but *renovating a* house in a foreign language is even harder. It is one *thing to realise* that the builders have *put* the lavatory where the washing machine is supposed to be, but *quite another to explain the problem in a language that you stopped* learning when you were 15.

A few years ago, we fell in love with a *three-bedroom wreck in Burgundy. It had* not been lived in for a few years, and it needed a complete renovation. Undeterred, we bought it within a week. What followed was not so much a catalogue of disasters, but a series of mishaps that will be of great benefit to those treading the same path.

Our first mistake was to employ an English plumber, whose wife had introduced us *to* the house. I first visited the house a year after we had bought it, and I was presented with water gushing from pipe joints, a gaping hole where a sink had been casually ripped out, and the bathrooms were more basic than those used by a desert tribe. The plumber had returned to Britain, so *there was little we could do.* The electrics which were installed by a friend of the plumber, felt — almost literally — ropey.

With a van load of furniture arriving in three weeks, we turned to the locals. They were extremely helpful. The previous owner gave us a pamphlet that listed all the *local* tradesmen. After seeking various quotes, we employed the local builders (Enterprise Générale de Bâtiment) who called on *specialists needed to plaster, tile, shore up*, rewire and replumb.

The co-operation between the tradesmen was unlike anything I had witnessed in Britain. At the beginning, *they all met in the* house for a "council of war", which I would thoroughly recommend. We discussed each room in great detail and, after plans *had been finalised, the work went smoothly.*

The problem was language. Before every meeting, I would rehearse. Conversation classes are one thing, but the French words for "reinforced steel joists" and "thrump spoke" are not normally bandied. The *catalogues issued by two large French DIY* chains — Obi and Castorama — were invaluable. These, with a lexicon of building terms found *in the Continental Bookshop in* London, got me through.

Although the work has not yet been finished, we can now enjoy our *house*. The work carried out has been excellent and the prices fair. Most British have the suspicion that French builders are even more on the make than their equivalents back *home*, but this was not the case for us.

TO THOSE *intending* to undertake a similar renovation, I would also recommend opening a bank account as soon as possible. *French tradesmen do not wish to* be paid in traveller's cheques or a fist full of £50 notes. A French bank account is also *useful for establishing direct debits (les prélèvements automatiques)* to pay the bills of the utility companies.

Incidentally, paying for electricity is different in France. There, you nominate the number of kilowatts you wish to use (*puissance mise à votre disposition*) and you are levied on that amount. There are also special tariffs, which are useful for those who only use the house in summer.

KERRYN BROOKER

Checklist of useful builder's vocabulary

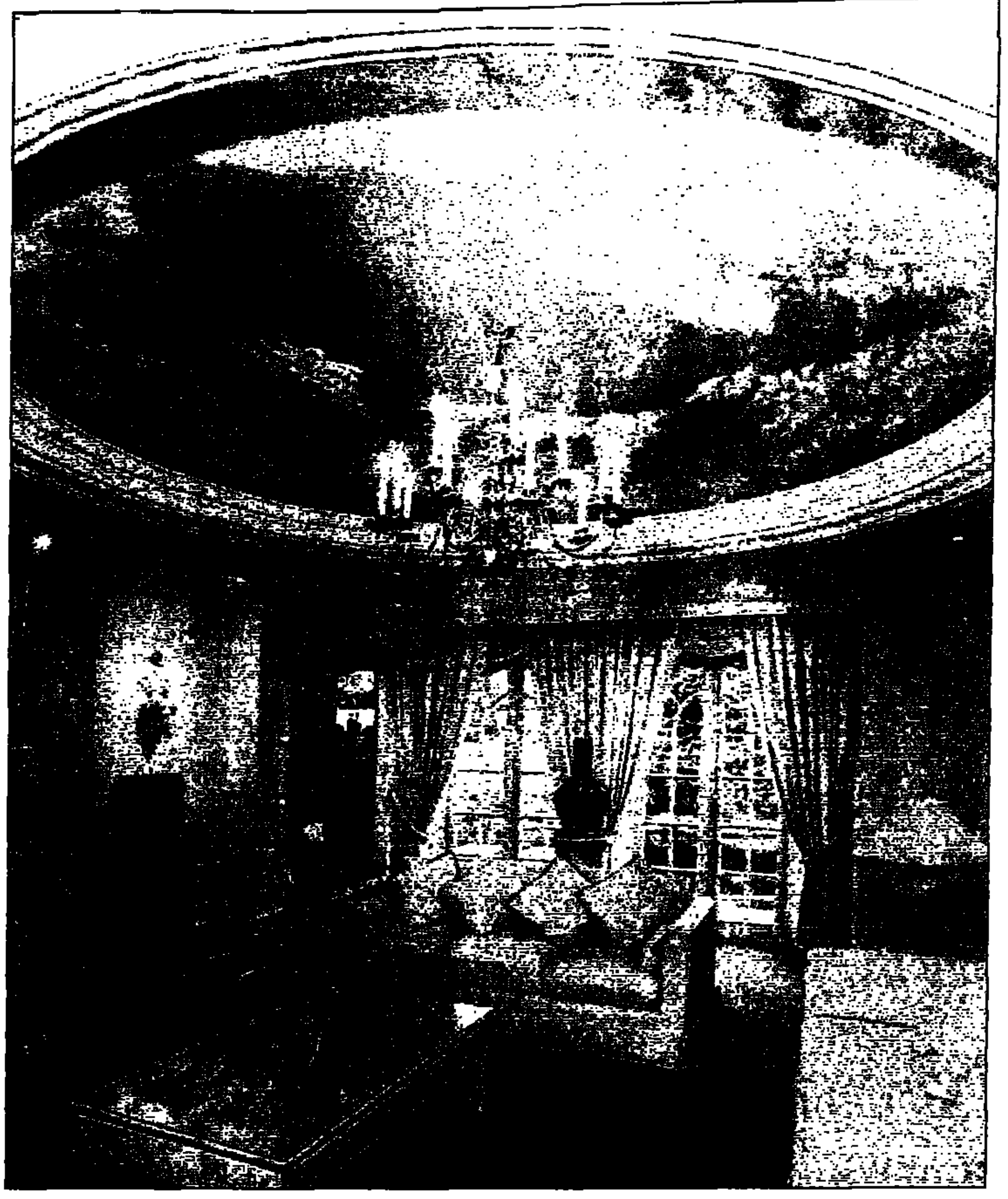
ENGLISH	FRENCH	ENGLISH	FRENCH
estimate	*le devis*	mains sewerage	*le tout-à-l'égout*
wiring system	*l'électricité*	attic conversion	*l'aménagement du grenier*
central heating	*le chauffage central*	carpenter	*le menuisier*
(electrical) socket	*la prise*	builder's merchant	*le marchand de matériaux*
water supply	*l'alimentation en eau*	partition wall	*la cloison*
plumbing	*la plomberie*	builder	*le maçon*
drainage	*l'évacuation des eaux usées*	roof check and repairs	*l'entretien et les réparations du toit*
septic tank	*la fosse septique*		

The colonial-style front of Whitton Place, complete with flagpole and Union Jack, plus a four-car garage

In the hall of the gizmo king

Cranky but comfortable or terrifyingly tacky? The answer is in the eye of the buyer

The 50ft pool has its own bar and changing room with sauna. The drawing room, right, has casements opening on to the koi pool



ANDREW HASSON

Driving to Whitton Place on a blusterous night, as Owl in *Winnie The Pooh* might have said, the air rich and moist with a Brighton sea fret that had somehow managed to sneak over the border into Hove. I couldn't make up my mind whether the house was weird or wonderful.

I had studied the estate agent's brochure and done my homework. I knew they wanted £1 million to £1.5 million for what, to my mind at any rate, looked like a jumped-up house in the suburbs, albeit with koi carp and cupolas. Even so, I was pretty certain of the tack I was going to take: the tacky tack. And my first glimpse of the place didn't do anything to change my mind. With its flagpole, Union Jack snapping like washing on a clothes line, Corinthian columns and topiary like a standard poodle's bottom flanking the front door, the house looked like somebody's idea of a bizarre joke (what do you get when you cross the White House with a Barratt Home?).

Crunching up the gravel, I had the feeling I was being watched. At first I suspected it was King Trident, whose lifesize sculpture dangled from the front wall flanked by two giant clams holding hardy annuals. Then I realised it was the security cameras, zooming in on my every move, which were making my neck hairs stand on end.

Derek Edmonds, the retired owner in his late forties, is known in the area for having been a jeweller and pawnbroker in Brighton. He showed me around the house which has been his home for nearly 18 years and seemed almost as keenly aware of the strange character of the place.

Standing in the middle of his smoked salmon-pink master bathroom, he demonstrated how, at the push of a button, a jet of water shoots out of the bottom of the chandelier on to whoever happens to be lolling in the enormous round tub below. "I was telling someone about this and as I was doing so I realised it sounded terrible. Terrible! But it's not, really."

And, he is right. Because although Whitton Place is hardly a shrine to good taste, it is indeed what Mr Edmonds insists it is: a house for living in. A house that is fun. A house for those who crave creature comforts, and lots of them.

There are gadgets and gizmos everywhere. In the peach bedroom, for instance, you can lie on the bed and use a sort of Mission Control panel to do everything from summon tea (delivered by the gentleman's gentleman, George) to draw the curtains or run the bath. "The water has been pre-set to come out at just the right temperature, the plug goes down automatically, and when the bath gets to the desired level, the water turns itself off." When the water does come out, it spews from the beaks of swan-head taps. Does he ever, I wonder, forget which control button to push and wind up running the bath when he really means to open the safe? Or summon George when he really only fancies a bit of *EastEnders*? And there's more. Go through the enormous *en suite* dressing room, clothes folded immaculately in stacks which, one suspects, bear the loving mark of George, and at the end, hidden away behind what looks like just another wall, is a sauna. "Just a little one, of course: there's a bigger one downstairs."

At the other end of the suite is the fitness room. "If I used this thing every day, I'd lose 20lb." Mr Edmonds says of a white-padded contraption which, at the touch of yet another button, starts thrashing about wildly.

Downstairs, in the living room, the centre of the floor revolves. "That was from my crazy younger days," Mr Edmonds admits. "We had a round sofa and you could sit on it and spin: spin around so you could have a cuddle by the fire; spin around so you could have a view of the garden; just spin around for the hell of it if you liked." While spinning you could gaze up into the Carolina-blue cupola, with its fluffly white clouds.

One of the peculiarities, structurally, of the house is its three staircases. "The previous owner had a thing about *Fiddler on the Roof* and the song about a house with three stairways," Mr Edmonds says. The main staircase is wide, and sweeping down it I feel rather like a malnourished Mae West making an entrance.

The grounds, like the house, hide myriad secrets, tasteful and otherwise. There are little benches, a metalwork elephant, statues of mysterious-looking Chinese men, a hard tennis court ("Don't forget to mention the tennis court"), and a cherry tree where, in summer, at precisely 7pm, a flock of red and green parrots comes to visit. "Don't ask me where they come from."

Alongside the house is an enormous koi pool, filled with carp the size of groupers. "We had a koi cull recently: we had to fish out about 500 of the smaller ones and give them to friends."

The fish thrive thanks to filtration and pumping system hidden under a "rockery". "Oh, it's not real. It's like Disneyland, really," Mr Edmonds says, gesturing to the rocks. There are more surprises: a 50ft heated swimming pool shaped rather like a kidney bean; a pair of palms, even better than the ones at his house in Spain; a conservatory where, on reckless summer evenings, one can summon the bartender to dish up the Martinis while above, in the gallery, the gentlemen play cards.

All of this five minutes from the centre of Brighton, 20 minutes from Gatwick, an hour from London. So why is he leaving this utopia with topiary? "It's just too big. I suddenly felt it was obscene really, two people living in such an enormous house. But I shall miss it."

WINIFRED HUGHES

● *Agent: Hamptons, Horsham, West Sussex (01403 211766).*

Selling up: Derek Edmonds

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Whitton Place, Tongdean Road, Hove, East Sussex. ● **Price:** £1 million to £1.5 million ● **Shopping:** Cullens, for snackaholics, is just two minutes away. Downtown Brighton with its chic Lanes and the weird and wonderful North Laine area, is a further five-minute drive. ● **Schools:** Roedean and Lancing College are within easy reach ● **Travel:** Preston Park railway station (trains to Victoria or London Bridge) is a ten-minute walk; Gatwick airport a 30-minute drive. ● **Entertainment:** Racing at Brighton, Plumpton or Glorious Goodwood. The Theatre Royal in Brighton. County cricket at Hove. Football at Brighton and Hove Albion's Goldstone Ground, but not for long. Sailing from Brighton Marina

Water spews forth from swan-head taps in the bathroom

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BARGAINS. Repossessions and Reduced for quick sale props. Capital Property Lists. 7 days 10am-10pm 0171 833 1104.

CHEPSTOW RD W2 Close to Westbourne Grove. Raised ground floor 1 bed conversion. High ceiling, fire place etc. West facing gardens. £145,000 Leasehold. Westbourne Estates 0171 727 8612.

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LUXURY PENTHOUSE
Overlooking Hyde Park
Top 2 floors, large S & W roof terraces, 2 beds, 2 bath (1 e/s), kitchen, dining room, drawing room. Porter, secure garage space. Tube & Oxford St 5 mins. Lease 61yrs renewable. Offers over £500,000. 0181 9531307.

HAMMERSMITH TERRACE, CHISWICK
Pretty Victorian terraced house adjacent river. 4 double beds (1 with en/s shower), 31ft x 16ft recep, 21ft x 9ft FF kitchen/diner, bath with WC & bidet, sep WC, front and rear gardens. O/S Parking avail by arrangement. Very good order. Freehold.
£425,000. View today.
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GOLDSMITH ESTATE W3.
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NORTH OF THE THAMES

LITTLE VENICE Penthouse duplex o'look canal terr. 3 beds £375,000 Ian Jones P'ship 0171 266 4821.

LITTLE VENICE/Maida Vale. The specialist local agents. Vickers & Co 0171 289 1692

MILE END PLACE E1. 2 bedroom victorian cottage, dble recep rm, garden, £102,000 Freehold. 0171 480 6815.

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W2 Close to Lancaster Gate 2 bed Penthouse flat, 2 balconies in period bldg. £159,950 Westways 0171 792 2167

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WHITECHAPEL E1 1 bedroom victorian conversion with garden, £75,000 Leasehold. 0171 480 6815.

W2 New refurb 2 bed split level flat in small pbb. Nr Queensway & tubes £159,950 Westways 0171 792 2167.

W2 Spac split level 2 bed flat in mod pbb - with pot. £169,950 Westways 0171 792 2167.

W2/W11 Urgent appeal to all vendors. We are selling more than we can replace. Please call Westways 0171 792 2167.

SOUTH OF THE THAMES

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CAMBERWELL GROVE £250,000. Artist's Georgian in prestigious Ave. 95 beds 0171 277 2826.

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SW12 Clapham South. Lovely large 3 dble bed Edwardian terrace, period features, large reception marble fireplace, 20' Shaker kitchen, patio garden. 2 mins walk tube. Offers over £200,000. 0171 303 7165.

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L/H 142yrs.
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SW1
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PHILIP · MARKS
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3 reception rooms
2 bathrooms, 3 beds
1 cloakroom, 2 garage
Large garden
Very desireable area
£350,000.
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Elevated position offering glorious view - fronting National Trust Woodland.
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(Near St Tropez) House & garage for sale Cavalaire-Sur-Mer inclusive of furniture, fixtures. Sleeps 6/8, large patio, on new complex with large shared pool. Quiet & exclusive. Currently producing income from letting to British residents.
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Supremely 5 bedroom detached country houses set on a island surrounded by rivers. Each home backing directly to the waters edge. Where the specification matches the exclusivity of the location and where only 15 properties alone will be built.

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Exceptional Luxury Villa
As new Master S/C suite: Bedroom. Lounge. Dressing Room. 2 Baths.
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Four ensuite bedrooms.
Lounge. Dining Room. Kitchen. Utility Room. Storage Room.
Heated pool. Pitch & Putt. Floodlit Tennis Court. Adjacent Shower & Toilet.
5 pkg bays, mature gdns.
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£395,000
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ELITE PROPERTIES

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Winkworth

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Entrance lobby, anteroom, hall, study, downstairs cloakroom, drawing room, dining room, breakfast room, kitchen, utility room, cellarage, master bedroom with ensuite bathroom, dressing room, 4 further bedrooms, family bathroom, separate WC. 45' Front garden with off street parking, garage. 66'x76' South West facing rear garden, magnificent period features.

Price: £525,000 Freehold.

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A listed Manor House in a magnificent setting with 2 cottages, range of buildings, lake & paddocks. About 20 acres.

Excess £550,000

NORWICH OFFICE
TEL: 01603 617431 Fax: 01603 619945

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SW10
A well presented three bedroom apartment with two interconnecting reception rooms on the third floor of this period mansion block.
2/3 beds, bath, 2 receps, bed 3/study, clks, kit, utility.
74 yrs approx £360,000

CLAREVILLE GROVE, SW7
Interior designed to a very high standard, a light and bright house in a sought after street.
Master Bed, e/s bath, 2 beds, bath, hall, recep, din rm, kit, conservatory, clk, utility, w/f Garden, o/s parking.
Freehold £975,000

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BEVERSTON MEWS, UPPER MONTAGU STREET, W1

A choice of 4 newly built mews houses with garages in an exclusive and secure gated cul-de-sac.

Three houses fully furnished. *Prices £595,000 each.*
One house with carpets, curtains & kit equipment. Price £575,000 FREEHOLD.

VIEWING TODAY 10.30am to 4.30pm

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The restoration and careful conversion of this Victorian Mansion has resulted in 5 spectacular apartments combining elegant, well planned and superbly fitted accommodation - within 1/2 mile of the village and 15 minutes from the West End.

3x3 Bed apartments with 2 Bathrooms. Fabulous Living Room, Kitchen and private garden.

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From: £285,000 to £495,000. 125 year lease.

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HERTS
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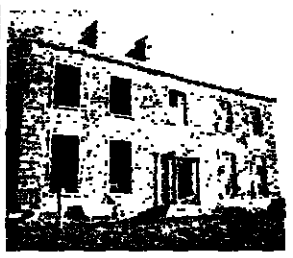

You can't find a house! Have you got the land to build on? A unique opportunity exists, subject to planning, to purchase and re-create to one's own exact requirements a stunning Georgian cut stone house of 6-10,000sq ft.

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BECTIVE DAVIDSON

BECTIVE DAVIDSON

SOUTH AUDLEY STREET, W1
An excellent bright and spacious first floor apartment in a prime corner period building overlooking the Grosvenor Chapel with the benefit of a separate s/c STUDIO flat with e/s bath.
2 beds, 2 e/s baths, clks, recep, kit.
45 yrs approx £565,000

GROSVENOR SQUARE, W1
A raised ground floor apartment with westerly views across Grosvenor Square. two separate self contained staff flats and a private parking space.
2/3 beds, 2 e/s baths, clks, 2 receps, kit + 2 S/C flats with studio rm & bath. Parking space.
58 yrs approx £875,000

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PORTMAN HERITAGE

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£1.7M

HYDE PARK VIEWS
3,000 sq ft ambassadorial apt overlooking Hyde Park in prestigious period block. 4 bedrooms, 2 formal reception rooms. Long Lease
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Exceptional interior designed apt near Harrods. Low service charges. Ideal rental investment. 2 bedrooms, 1 reception room
CASH BUYERS ONLY
Leasehold. £435,000

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VIRGINIA WATER
WATERLOO 45 MINS
Close Sunningdale & Wentworth. Easy access Heathrow. Former Mill House in 25 wooded acres on River Bourne. Hall, 3 receps, kitch, 6 beds, 3 baths, oil CH. Secondry house avail.
Offers in Excess of £500,000 invited.
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Tonbridge.
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Price £1.8m.
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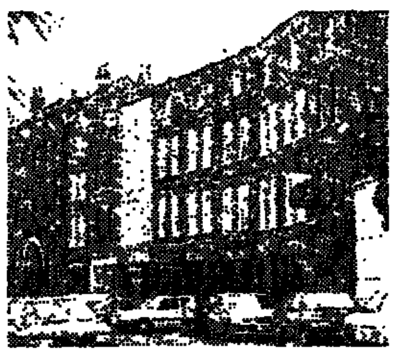
NARROW • STREET
LIMEHOUSE • E14
BETWEEN THE CITY & CANARY WHARF

Eight new luxury waterside apartments built to reflect Narrow Street's heritage.



Built as part of the Narrow Street conservation area, Creek House is an individually designed building located on one of Limehouse's most desirable riverside streets. Convenient for both The City and all the amenities of Docklands, every apartment has been designed and finished to the highest standards throughout and is available for immediate occupation.

Prices from **£165,000**

Each apartment enjoys:-
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- Two double bedrooms and spacious living area.
- *Secure underground parking with CCTV monitoring.*
- Westferry DLR station is a short walk away - 10 mins journey to Bank.
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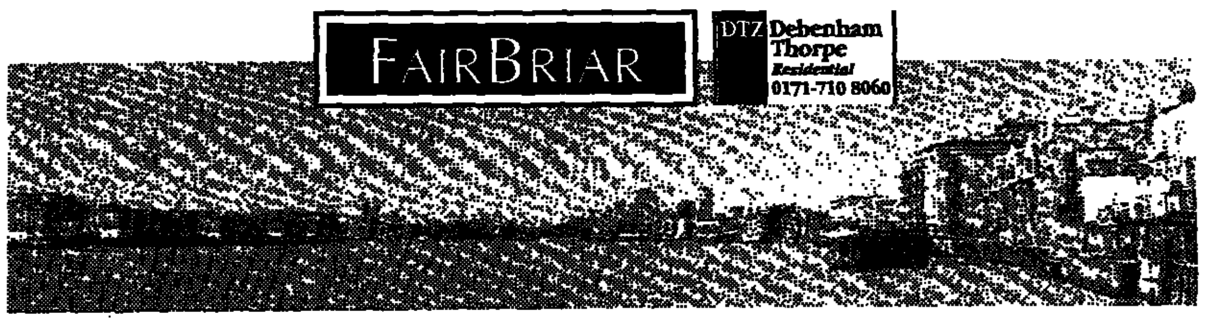
- Ash faced internal doors, Maple kitchen units and Ash Strip flooring / carpets.

Sales Centre open seven days a week 10.30am - 5.30pm. Telephone: 0171-536 9380



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Brand new luxury top floor flat with lift. 2 double beds, 2 baths(1 en suite), double recep + balcony, fl kitchen, dishwasher, wash/dry. All new & fully furnished. OSP. Near Kilburn/Queens Park tube.
£275pw.
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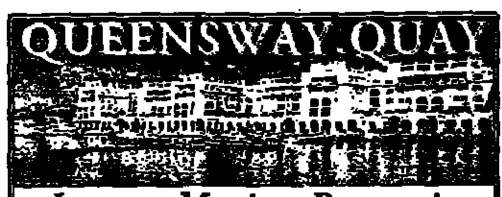

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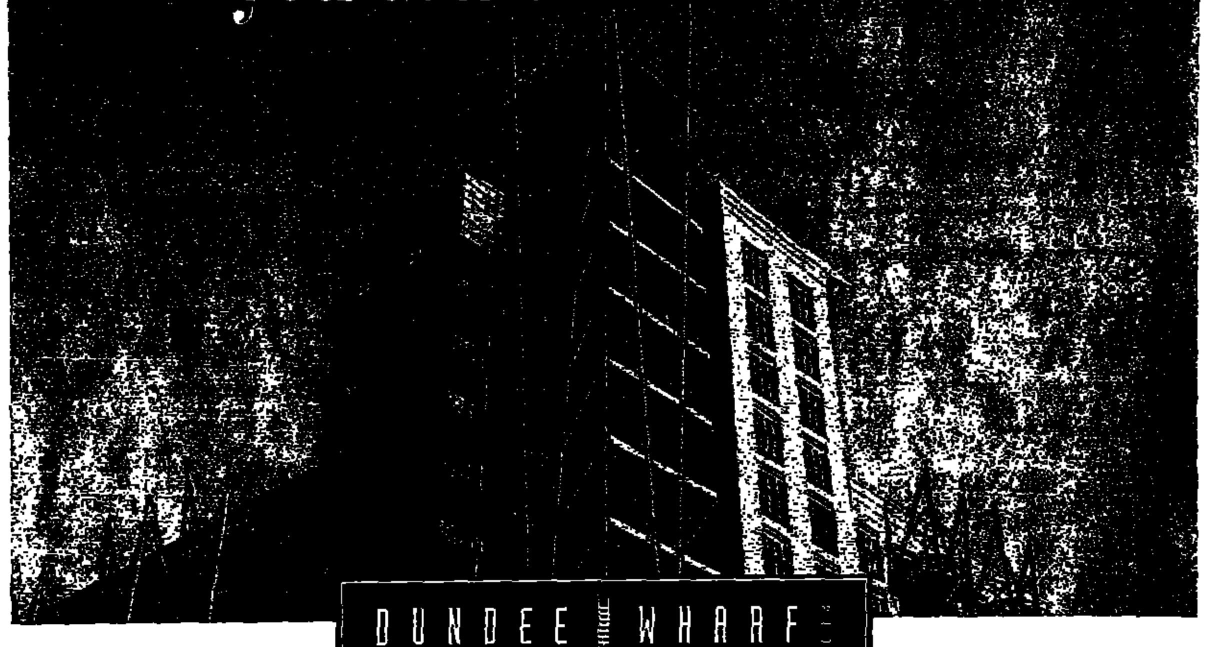

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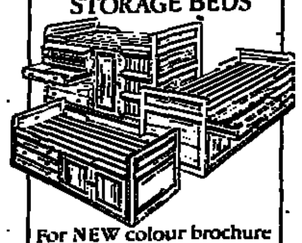

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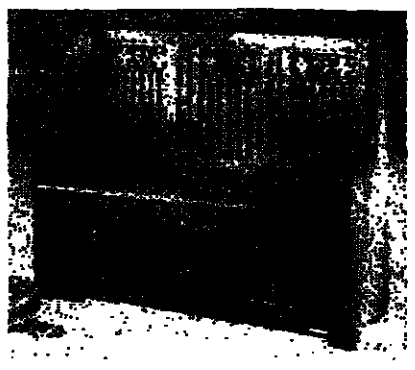

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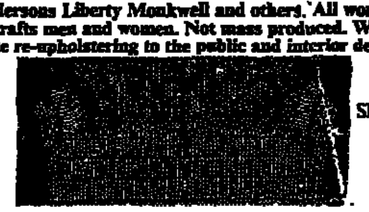

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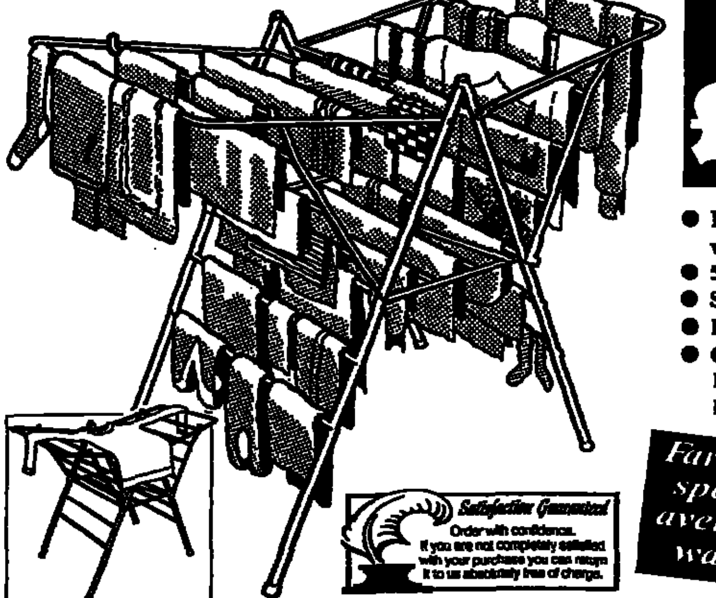

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"It's always exciting to discover new talent. We have been sponsoring competitions in the United States for more than ten years now — and it's a special pleasure to be running these events in the UK," stated Howard Ely of The International Library of Poetry. "We're especially interested in receiving poems from new or unpublished poets."

How to Enter

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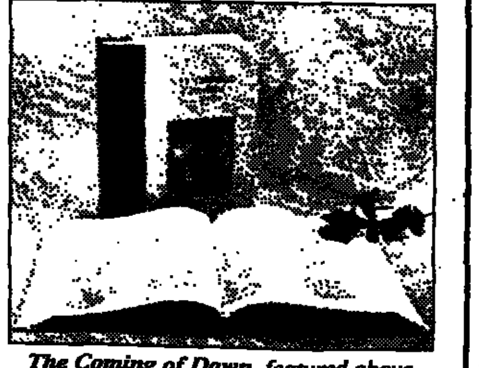
The poem should be no more than 20 lines, and the poet's name and address must appear at the top of the page. The entry must be typed or neatly handwritten and will not be returned. All poets who enter will receive a reply, along with complete competition rules, within nine weeks.



The Coming of Dawn, featured above, is one of the Library's recent deluxe hardbound anthologies.

Publication Opportunity

All of the poems entered into the competition will also be considered for inclusion in one of The International Library of Poetry's forthcoming anthologies. Every poem remains the exclusive property of its author. Anthologies published by the organisation have included *A Passage in Time, Voices on the Wind, The Other Side of the Mirror, Between a Laugh and a Tear* and *The Coming of Dawn*, among others.

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GUY NORMAN

Dennis and Jill Norman left city life for the good life of running holiday flats and a tearoom at South Hallsands, Devon

After the Easter holiday, when the golden promise of summer beckons, a city dweller's fancy can turn to an idyllic retreat. Now one area of Devon is proving to be a magnet for downshifters, those wanting to escape to a simpler, healthier life.

According to the Economic and Social Research Council, 90,000 town dwellers a year are heading for the country, which suggests that these dreams may be becoming reality. In the South Hams area of Devon the trend is so marked that agents say property prices are returning to the heady heights of the late 1980s.

In Salcombe, for example, a terraced cottage on Custom House Quay, with one reception room, two bedrooms, a third in the loft space, and a running mooring, is for sale at £175,000 through Fulfords' Salcombe office, which also offers a modern detached three-bedroom house with estuary views at £225,000.

"There was a sea change in market conditions in 1996," says Philip Marchand, of Marchand Petit of Kingsbridge. "Last year, 64 per cent of our sales went to people from outside the area, mostly from cities in the South East and the Midlands. Such people are fed up with city life and the lifestyle here is more relaxed, so they work from home or live in properties that have income potential, such as farmhouses with barns converted into holiday cottages."

So why is this triangular area south of the A38, east of Plymouth and west of Torbay so appealing? For a start, it is at the limit of an easy trip from London by train or car.

The area is also exceptionally beautiful, says Colette Charsley-White of Knight Frank's Exeter office. "It's rural, but not too rural. You are never far from Plymouth or Exeter. Totnes is a lovely Elizabethan market town full of artists, potters and weavers, and Dartmouth has some artists and writers.

"When someone dreams of living in Devon, you can bet that's the area they picture. Some people commute weekly to Bristol, Birmingham or London, returning at weekends, while their children grow up by the sea."

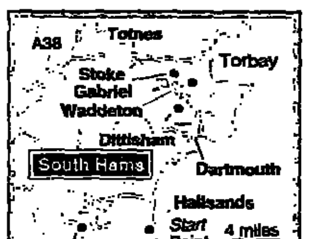
The investment market is strong, too, with holiday lets giving a good return.

Mrs Charsley-White deals with cottage complexes, and says: "About 75 per cent of our inquiries are from outside the area, 60 per cent from the Home Counties."

On her books is a complex of seven holiday cottages converted from a group of listed barns at Waddeton Home Farm, six miles from Totnes, with a thatched cottage nearby to provide the owners' ideal accommodation. The price of the package is £550,000.

Knight Frank and Marchand Petit are marketing Maelcombe House at East Prawle, which has magnificent sea views and, with its ten bedrooms and 25 acres, the potential for use as a guest house. It for sale at £680,000.

Dennis Norman, aged 45, and his wife, Jill, 44, took the plunge last October, paying



£430,000 for a large house, Trouts, in a spectacular position at South Hallsands, near Start Point. The house is converted into eight holiday flats, with recreational facilities, a tearoom and gardens.

Mr Norman, who formerly lived in Woking, Surrey, and worked in the City, thinks the house was a bargain. But he and his wife have yet to discover how they will cope with their first season.

"We geared up for Easter, when we were fully-booked," Mr Norman says. "In high season our smallest two-bedroom flat lets for £380 a week, our largest, which sleeps eight, goes for £770. It will be hard work. But now, instead of catching the 8.15am to Waterloo, I'm here with my tray of fresh crab sandwiches."

Lynn and Richard Micklewright, both 48, have recently bought Knowle Farm, a 17th-century farmhouse with three holiday cottages at Rattery, near Totnes, for £550,000.

"My husband worked in the City for 30 years, and has always said that was not the way to live," Mrs Micklewright says. "When Richard got the chance to leave the City we decided we'd do something different. We see it as a change of direction, a new challenge.

"It's a long way from the Home Counties and it may seem like being on holiday initially but we'll have a lot to do, because we're booked for the whole of July and August. For us it's in at the deep end."

The market for second homes in the area is rising, too. Martin Lamb, of Knight Frank, says: "In 1989, second homes were the first thing people got rid of, but now they are coming back. We've just sold a Regency rectory in three acres with water frontage at East Portlemouth, near Salcombe, for £950,000.

"The sailing in these areas is an enormous pull and a view or access to water adds a premium of 20 to 40 per cent. The most valuable areas are Dittisham, Stoke Gabriel and Waddeton, on the Dart, where big houses with water frontage sell for £2 million. Salcombe comes next."

Michael Weller, a Salcombe agent who is selling a two-bedroom flat at £199,000, says: "It's a pretty town, a very middle-class holiday area, and popular with sailors. Holiday lets can't satisfy demand in July and August, when the town's population swells from 2,000 to about 20,000."

Inland, too, business is brisk. Philip Hughes, of Hands Hughes, Totnes, says so much property has changed hands in the last year that there's now a dearth. "There are more people looking for holiday homes here and there's more disposable income around, which we had not seen until six months ago when the market took off. People want second homes as investments. Period character properties have got back to the level they were at their peak.

"But this area has always been relatively expensive. I've just sold a 1960s four-bedroom village house in one acre that needed £30,000 spent on it for £192,500. People often come house-hunting and realise they can't afford it. Prices are especially rising in the £200,000 to £400,000 range."

● *Marchand Petit, Kingsbridge, Devon, 01548 857588; Knight Frank, Exeter, 01392 423111; Fulfords, Salcombe, 01548 843731; Michael Weller, Salcombe, 01548 843246; Hands Hughes, Totnes, 01803 863811.*

PROPERTY NEWS

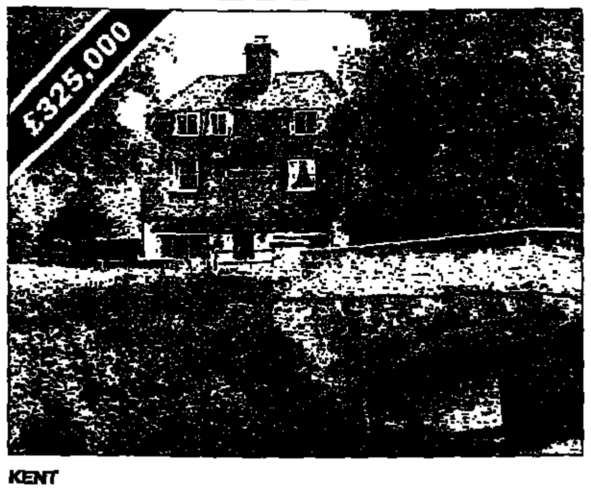
■ IVY HOUSE FARM, near Diss, Norfolk, once home to Roger Bacon, an ancestor of Sir Francis Bacon, is for sale at £240,000, *Amanda Loose writes.* The original deeds to the six-bedroom Grade II listed farmhouse, with parts dating from 1480, are held by the Bacon Foundation in Chicago. Details from Savills, 01603 612211.

■ MOST AMERICANS in London choose to rent a house in Chelsea, while tenants in Wapping and the Isle of Dogs remain resolutely British, according to a survey from Knight Frank. More than 40 per cent of tenants in Chelsea are Americans; the Brits 18 per cent.

■ A GRADE II* listed converted Norman church at Little Oakley, near Harwich, Essex, the setting for Arthur Ransome's *Secret Water*, the sequel to *Swallows and Amazons*, is for sale at about £225,000. Dating from the 12th century, the church was converted in the 1980s but retains many features, including its Gothic archways. Details from Strutt & Parker, 01473 214841.

FOR SALE

ON THE WATERFRONT



KENT
The Bridge House, Penshurst. Renovated 17th-century timber-framed house on the edge of an historic village, with a garden fronting the river Medway. Four bedrooms, two bathrooms, drawing room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, office, utility. Coach house/garage, stable and boat house. About £325,000
(John D. Wood, 01342 326326).

CORNWALL
Carricknath, The Square, St Mawes. Detached single-storey Grade II listed building, fronting St Mawes harbour and overlooking St Anthony Head and Pendennis Point. Three bedrooms (all en suite), two reception rooms, two kitchens and garage. Lower store/drying room/storage for sailing equipment. Offers invited
(Miller & Son, 01579 344401).

BATH
21 Sydney Buildings, Bathwick Hill. Early 19th-century, semi-detached house with fine views over Bath and canal frontage. Five bedrooms, two bathrooms, dressing room, sitting room, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, hall and cloakroom. Cellars and gardens. About £325,000 (Savills, 01225 444622).

CHERYL TAYLOR

SHOPAROUND

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AUTHENTIC TESTIMONIALS

For eight years, the Health Bracelet has been sold with long-lasting success. Here are many testimonials (full names and addresses are registered in our archives as legal evidence) which confirm the extraordinary effectiveness of magnetotherapy. (The Health Bracelet is effective for 5 to 7 years)

I was suffering from pains in the back and rheumatism of the spine. Also I had a terrible pain in my shoulder due to an accident. Well, ever since I've been wearing the Health Bracelet I haven't had any back or shoulder pain. I also suffered from insomnia and stomach aches due to the stress and the pain. Now I sleep very well and no longer have stomach aches. The Health Bracelet works really fast; after having worn it for only two months, I felt an improvement. I've been wearing it for five years now and feel very good. Thank you. R.D.

I've always worked hard on our farm; over the years, I'd developed so much tension in my arms and shoulders that I couldn't sleep because of the pain. I also started having problems getting dressed and functioning normally. After seeing an ad about the Health Bracelet, I decided to order one, but I really didn't believe in it. Well, the help this bracelet brought me is unbelievable. I don't feel pain anymore; I sleep very well; and I'm not afraid to work. I've been wearing the Bracelet for over three years, and I haven't had any relapses. C.R.

I've been wearing the Health Bracelet for four years now, and still can't get over how many changes have occurred. The pain I had from the rheumatism in my legs and feet also disappeared. I was so satisfied with the Health Bracelet that I encouraged a friend who was suffering from severe rheumatic pain to buy it. She told me the Health Bracelet relieved much of her pain. I will always be grateful to you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. G.L.

I was doubtful at first, but then I told myself I would try it. I had surgery for lower back pain fifteen years ago during which I went through a great deal of suffering. Thanks to the Health Bracelet, I am no longer in pain. It's wonderful. I recommend it to everyone. Four of my friends also bought one and are very satisfied with it. Thank you. Y.L.

My knees were swollen and I could barely walk. I saw an ad about how effective the Health Bracelet was, so I ordered one. After some time, to my great surprise, both the pain and the swelling disappeared. My circulation also improved. I couldn't do without my Health Bracelet anymore; I strongly recommend it. H.T

My bones and my circulation were bad because I couldn't exercise due to illness. I am now 58 years old. I've had three Health Bracelets so far. I am very proud of it and I strongly recommend the Bracelet to everyone. Not only does it make me feel better, but it also looks nice. H.T.

In 1970, I broke a shoulder in a car accident. All that doctors could do was pin my shoulder. I couldn't work with that arm anymore; I was in so much pain. For the past 7 years, I've been wearing the Health Bracelet and working with less pain. I never take the Health Bracelet off. I recommend it to all my friends. R.J.M.

I felt pain in my legs; my hands and feet felt numb. For the past year, I've been wearing the Health Bracelet and I can honestly feel a difference; the numbness is gone and my circulation is better. In the beginning, I really didn't think it could work. But now I recommend it to all my friends. T.F.

I've been wearing the Health Bracelet for two years and I am completely satisfied with it. It relieves my pain considerably. I could no longer go on without my Health Bracelet R.D.

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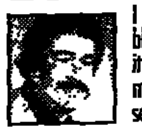
I was suffering from rheumatism in my neck. My wife had a terrible pain in her arms due to an accident. We ordered two Health Bracelets, and much to our surprise, our pain went away. I no longer take the pain relievers or sleeping pills because the pain has disappeared and I can sleep normally again. I also digest better and don't have intestinal problems anymore. My wife, Mary, is no longer suffering and is very happy. We have both worn our bracelets for several years and recommend it to everyone. **Mr and Mrs G.**



When I started wearing the Health Bracelet, my headaches went away. I also noticed a change in my rheumatic pain, and I am not as tired anymore. My whole attitude has changed as a result. I had a couple of friends try it; the plain truth is they were completely astonished. I believe in the Health Bracelet and I encourage people to get one. R.M.

I admit I didn't believe the Health Bracelet could work. I felt terrible pain in my back and legs. I ordered the Bracelet. I'd been wearing it for one week when I started feeling the pain go away. After one month, the pain was completely gone. I recommended the Bracelet to several of my friends; they were all pleased with its effects. What's more, your company is honest and very reliable. A.P.

I had consulted four doctors for an inflammation of the joints; yet the pain persisted to the point that I could no longer sleep. With your Health Bracelet, I am in heaven because I now sleep throughout the entire night. Thanks to your Health Bracelet I am no longer in pain and I can now work normally. Thank you. R.L.

My friend and I have been suffering from stiff and painful joints for a long time. To our great surprise, after using the Health Bracelet for only two weeks, there was an unbelievable difference. I truly recommend this wonderful Health Bracelet to everyone. T.C.

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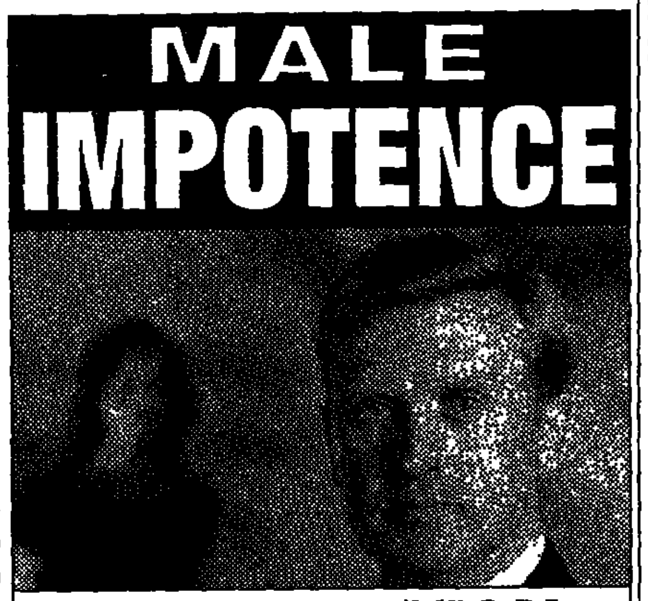

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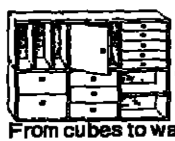

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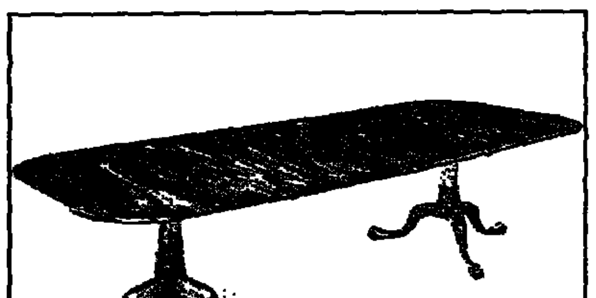

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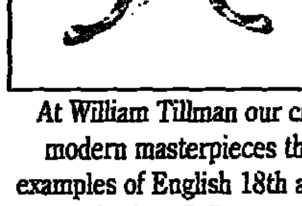
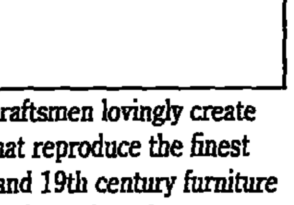

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My priceless Staffordshire

Not the china, the terrier. Roy Hattersley joins rescuers of the breed

Megan lost a leg when she fell, or jumped, through a second-storey window — an absurdly irresponsible way for a mother of four to behave.

On Easter Monday afternoon — blissfully unaware of her handicap — she sat demurely on her owner's knee in the front row of the Staffordshire Bull Terriers' Rescue charity auction. For one afternoon, on behalf of a supremely good cause, she was mixing with the elite of her breed.

Jemima Proper Lady had won a prize at Crufts — the exact name of which her young walker for the afternoon could not remember. Domino Flashy Lad (better known as Arnie) laid claim to being the Best Bull Terrier in the World. He had 28 challenge certificates and once won the Best of Show at the National Terrier Club Championship.

The auction was part of the Stafford Bull Terrier Rescue annual get-together — a celebration of ownership combined with a much-needed contribution to the income of a small and voluntarily-run charity. The dogs, next to their owners in orderly rows, looked as if they were posing for a Landseer group portrait. Only once throughout the entire afternoon was there a sudden bark and snap of jaws. A hundred heads turned and said instinctively "sit", "down", or "stay". The reflex over, the auctioneer sold a huge sack of proprietary dog food for twice its usual price.

There are dog refuges all over the country. Blue Cross and the RSPCA look after strays and victims on a grand scale. The "rescues", which specialise in specific breeds, usually board out their charges with volunteers until a permanent home can be found. The need for rescues is a condemnation of our society but their creation goes some way towards redeeming its reputation.

They are not a cheap or easy way of acquiring a dog. For at least a month or two, dogs which have been neglected, abandoned or abused are notoriously difficult to handle. But, in the end, they settle down, even though it is never possible to make up the missed weeks of early training. The main weakness with rescue dog owners is a tendency towards sentimentality. There are many worse faults.

I was not at Newby Bridge on Lake Windermere last Monday simply to be in the company of admirable people — understandable though that ambition would have been after 33 years in the House of Commons. I have a rescue dog myself — a Stafford Alsatian cross which was found wandering on Paddington Station.

Buster's behaviour was impeccable, possibly because he was overawed by the pedigree company which he kept. But then, so was the conduct of the other dogs. Staffordshire Bull Terriers are notoriously good-tempered.

Some turned up for the morning sponsored walks with studded collars and buccaneer's bandanas round their necks. But they failed to live up to the message of their finery. Although they did not walk at their owners heels with a discipline of the guards officers' dogs that I see in St James's Park, they enjoyed themselves in almost perfect peace. There was the occasional tug on the lead or sniff at a tree. But there was never a hint of trouble.

The uninitiated observer — looking over the assembled dogs and owners hurrying across Newby Bridge — would not have anticipated a quiet day. The paradigm dog was Anstaff Tranquila, a muscular black and white bruiser which his owner called Naz because of his admiration for Prince Naseem, the boxer who holds three world titles.

But Naz was notably short on the aggressive instinct which is essential to success in the fight game. He bent his head to enjoy scratching behind his ears and leant indolently against his owner. Naz — not a rescue dog, but there to support his less fortunate relations — was "good enough to show". But he is kept "at home as part of the family".

The Stafford's equitable reputation is, ironically, one of the reasons why it is sometimes in need of rescue. It is not a beautiful dog. Even when it is fit, it has a barrel chest and a rear end broad enough to be a coffee table. Its muzzle is too short and its ears bend over. But "staffies" — the affectionate diminutive illustrates the point — do possess an obvious anthropomorphic attraction. They appeal to people who imagine that they would identify with a dog that tells risqué jokes, rides a motor-cycle, likes a pint and can look after itself in a scrap. When they turn out to be just another member of a medium-sized canine breed — tirelessly good tempered, though shamelessly attention-seeking — the owner's disappointment often turns to rejection. That is where the rescue steps in.

Last Monday, some of the successes were on show — winning prizes of their own as the year's most improved dog or as partner to the best juvenile handler. The greatest achievements were on display from those dogs which were there just to prove that rescue (and in some cases redemption) is possible. A young couple were certain that their brindle bitch had recovered from the abuse which has sent her original owner to jail and the tawny four-year-old, whose back legs had both been broken in a car crash, walked with barely a limp. The white and tan Stafford that had suffered a stroke dragged one leg and wore a boot to protect its paw from grazing. But, said its owner, it is happy again.

You might argue — as my rescue dog-owning mother certainly would — that sometimes the best solution for the animal is extinction. The Staffordshire Bull Terrier Rescue has decided that only three times since 1990. But it has saved a hundred lost, abandoned and ill-treated dogs each year. When you want a dog, forget the pet shop and remember the rescue.

● *The Kennel Club has details of rescued SBTs in your area. (0171-493 6651 ext 212).*

BARRY GREENWOOD

Roy Hattersley (left, with Buster) joins the Staffordshire bull terrier walk at Newby Bridge. The money raised will help rescue abandoned dogs

ADOPT ME

Floss: blinded by accident

FLOSS is an 18-month-old black collie-cross spaniel who was brought to the centre after a road accident. She is blind but does not let this dent her enthusiasm for life. Contact NCDL Rescue Centre Roden, Roden Lane Farm, Roden, Telford, Shropshire TF6 6BP (01952 770225).

A VET WRITES

Q **When I watched Crufts on TV I was shocked to see so many dogs with docked tails. I thought this was illegal — or is the Kennel Club an exception? The commentators said they liked to see tails wagging — when tails are there to wag. What is the law about docking?**

A Before July 1, 1993, anyone could dock a puppy's tail before its eyes were open. Since then, docking a dog at any age has been illegal, except when done by a veterinary surgeon. The Guide to Professional Conduct of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons says it is "strongly opposed to docking by anyone unless for therapeutic or prophylactic reasons". This allows for amputation of part of the tail if it is crushed. The "truly prophylactic" phrase permits a vet to dock a puppy if there is a high probability that a full length tail will cause trouble in adult life. I believe docking should cease. It is a totally unnecessary mutilation. The Kennel Club could stop it immediately. Tails are important in dog to dog, and dog to man, communication.

JAMES ALLCOCK

● *Write to The Times Vet, Weekend*, The Times, *1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility.*

Grand National? The election? Spread betting, the latest fashion for a flutter, can mean serious gains or losses

Spread your bets please

It's not often that you can make a large sum of money for charity in a short time with little effort and have fun at the same time. I had been invited by City Index to try the fastest-growing form of gambling in the country (including the National Lottery) — spread betting. The winnings would go to charity and any losses would be forgotten.

Spread betting can be complicated (see panel, right). When you lose you can lose big-time, but if you are lucky, losses can be recouped quickly. The financial markets, horses, rugby, cricket, or the election, anything is fair game unless it is deemed "morally dubious".

I arrived in the City Index offices in London with a plan to bet on several races from a meeting at Hexham and then have a stab at the Arsenal v Liverpool Premiership match that evening. I started by betting money on the horses. Although he is not normally allowed to advise customers, in the interest of charity, Paul Austin, the director of sport, was guiding me away from the three-legged variety.

Normally you simply bet on which horse will win. Here it can be how many lengths there are at the finish between the first and second horse, or how many times favourites in all the races will win, come second or third.

In football you can punt on anything from the time of the first goal, how many corners there will be or the total shirt numbers of all the scorers. The first three races were a disaster. I had a series of £10 bets on the favourites and by the fourth race found myself £85 down and desperately needed a win.

I had never had the slightest interest in horse racing before but when my horse was running in second, I prayed for the leader to stumble, throw its jockey, or just disappear. Someone may have been listening. My horse staggered across the finishing line first and I had recouped some of my losses to leave myself just £65 down.

With the responsibility on my shoulders, this was no longer fun. As I became more and more involved it was clear how quickly you can become entangled. With spread betting you are always only one bet away from recouping all your losses even though you are using the same stake. It was time for a change. I was still £65 down so I looked at what bets could be placed on the Arsenal v Liverpool game. I felt the ref would let the game flow, so I decided to bet on the amount of yellow and red cards that would be shown, believing there wouldn't be many.

The company were also offering a spread of between 24-27 for the total shirt numbers of the goal scorers. With some of the most prolific strikers in the premiership playing I was sure Fowler (9), Collymore (8) or Wright (8) would hit the net several times. I just needed four goals from these players and I would be making some money (if the shirt numbers were added together, and if they all scored once and one scored twice, it would come to over 27 points and I would make £10 per point).

Collymore missed three chances that he would normally have buried. Being a Spurs supporter I would normally love to see Arsenal get beaten, but all allegiances had disappeared as I cheered Ian Wright, the Arsenal striker.

At half time there had been two bookings so I sold the bet back at a profit of £150. I was now £85 up. There were still no goals so I decided to bet £10 on an early goal in the second half. City Index had their spread at 68-70 minutes. Then Collymore found his golden touch in the 51st minute. I was ecstatic. I had won another £170 making £255.

At 65 minutes, Liverpool were awarded a penalty. But joy turned to despair when Fowler began telling the referee it wasn't a penalty. Thankfully the ref saw sense. Fowler missed the spot kick but another Liverpool player scored on the rebound. Unfortunately it was number 4. I had 13 points and needed another 15 to make money on the shirt bet. With 11 tense minutes to go Wright (8) managed to poke the ball into the net, another eight points. The final moments were unbearably tense but sadly there was no further goal.

I was juggling so many balls in the air I wasn't sure where I was when the game ended. In fact I took a loss of £70 on the shirt numbers but made a grand total profit of £185.

City Index, as a gesture of goodwill as they expected me to win more, is also putting a straight £100 bet on Smith's Band, number 14 in the Grand National today. If it wins, the Marc Fisher Trust stands to win a further £1,600 or so, depending on the odds. Cheer him on, please.

ADAM FRESCO

MARTIN BEDDALL

Adam Fresco, left, betting at City Index. He made £185 for charity by gambling on horses and football

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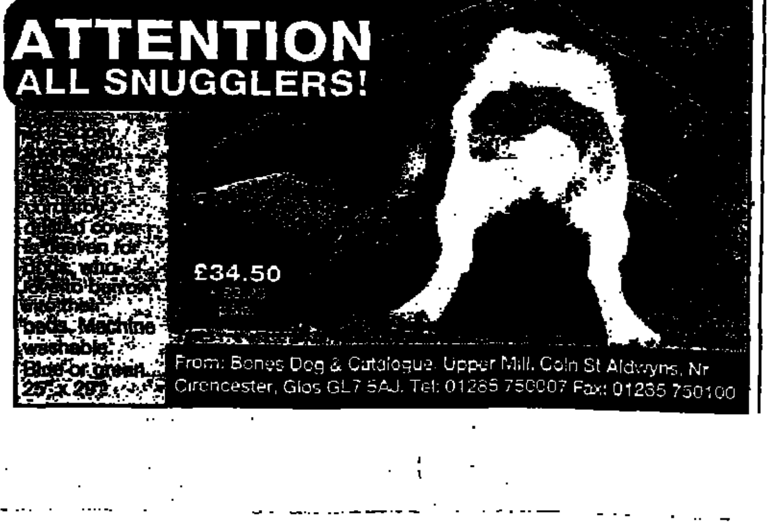

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'We fed the ducks, watched the boys kicking a ball around . . . and I suddenly thought that I could have lived a completely other life'

The working woman's lament

LIFE AND SOUL

GINNY DOUGARY

It started happening a few weeks ago, and always in precisely the same way. I'm walking across the common, taking a break from work, blithely minding my own business, when it strikes. The first time, which hurt the most, I had hoped was a random attack. But now, I can see that there is a pattern. A small boy is accompanied by someone who is obviously his nanny. The nannies are always sweet and loving and very young, and the child always looks supremely contented.

I must have witnessed this sort of scene hundreds of times since I've been a mother, but it has never made an impression before. Having worked since our first son was three months old, it has always looked entirely normal. But recently, for some reason, at the sight of a bonny little boy gabbling away to someone who is not his mother, running into her arms or playing hide-and-seek behind an avenue of trees, I am shot through with sadness. More peculiar and unnerving still, it suddenly looks wrong. The question is "Why?" and "Why now?" This is not one of those "feminist recants" confessions, which are a particular delight to the forces which are so eager to turn back the clock and transform us into cake-baking apron-wearers from Stepford.

But I do think that in one's reluctance to give any ground to the "woman's place is in the home" brigade, it has felt safer to deny the obvious. Which is, that for every mother who has young children and works full-time there are moments when she feels torn or guilty or regretful.

For years, I have sought to deny or repress this. Since most women are obliged to work — either as the major breadwinner or the sole earner or, simply, to help pay the bills — there is not a lot of choice about it. And since I am privileged enough to be able to earn my living from home, it has felt more comfortable, and certainly kinder, not to explore the downside of working motherhood with friends who have to go to an office every day.

Actually, I have to say that nearly all my female friends who have children have pushed or are pushing to work part-time or to spend part of their working week at home. It should be the case that the more senior you become, the more confidence you have to mould your working week to suit yourself. While your colleagues might prefer to have a long and bibulous midday break than to leave the office at six, you should be able to skip lunch and get home for bathtime. But office culture rarely works like this. If you want to be a player, you must play by the rules, not invent your own.

My friends divide rather evenly into the high-powered and reasonably affluent self-employed, and the low-powered and often skint self-employed. Both camps can work flexible hours and tailor their work to suit their lives. In theory, they should be able to see as much, or as little, of their children as they like. In practice, it rarely works out this way. Most of us, who are fortunate enough to have work, are wage-slaves to some extent — which means that we are often fagged out and irritable when we come to play with our children.

I remember keenly a former colleague telling me that she was so accustomed to handing her children over to her nanny, or sharing the parenting responsibility with her husband at weekends, that the thought of having sole charge of them really alarmed her.

Last half-term, for the first time in ages, we had no childcare, I had no deadline and my husband was working. Of course, there have been times in the past ten years when I've looked after the boys on my own. But to spend a whole week with them, just my sons and me, was something of a novelty.

On one of the days, we had a picnic on the common with another mother and her sons. It was a rare, early spring day when the sun shines full beam and everyone looks happy. We fed the ducks, watched the boys kicking a football around and talked idly about this and that. There was a great sense of female cameraderie, as other mothers we knew and their offspring stopped by to chat or steal a sandwich. It was such easy and uncomplicated pleasure, and I was suddenly struck by the thought that I could have lived a completely other life. A life which I had never really considered that I was equipped to enjoy, and now it was too late.

There is no way round this problem. I don't feel that I was born to be a hausfrau, but neither does it seem quite right that I have missed out on so much of my sons' childhood. The overpowering sense of regret I feel, when I see those little boys with their nannies, however, is not to do with my sons growing up so rapidly — but with the fact that, at 40, I am unlikely to find out if I would have been happier if I'd done things differently.

Help for the mother of all tantrums

Can good parenting be taught?

A sceptical **Jill Parkin** squeezed onto a new course to find out

There is a great British supermarket tradition which goes something like this: Harassed mother: "Do you want a smack?" Naughty child: "No. Hate you!" Smack! Waah! Other shoppers (under their breath): "What a terrible mother."

As many mothers think several times a day, there must be a better way. You may not be a supermarket smacker, but you may be a shouter or just frustrated and stressed by the daily battle of wills. Can parenting be taught?

Parenting courses are catching on. And you wouldn't believe the problems some people have. Or maybe, if you're a parent, you would. I went along to a session at a health centre in Maidenhead.

One mother said: "There was a time he would only eat in his toy car. Then it was only in bed. Now it's only outside. And a ritual has developed — I have to sit on a tree stump while he eats. Thank goodness it's spring."

> We had to close our eyes and imagine holding our child

I've never gone in for group therapy before and had the idea we would sit round chatting for a couple of hours. All very cosy but not much good when the tree stump is four inches deep in snow.

Stories were swapped. Me-too noises were made about temper tantrums (ours, not the children's). But there's more than that to this seven-week pilot course, which is run by East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust.

Rachel McHugh, the health visitor who was leading the session and had just been role-playing on the carpet with her colleague, Angela Baldwin, said: "There is a framework. The course does move you on." Rachel was the naughty child throwing her toys around the floor and Angela was by turns the supermarket mother and the successful, post-parenting course mother. Each session takes a situation, gives examples of right and wrong ways to handle it, and asks you what you're going to do to improve things. This session was about how to talk to your child.

The general idea is that you don't say: "I don't believe this! You've made a mess again. Tidy it up now. Daddy will be so cross when he hears." You use what the experts call an "I" message. Something like: "I spent a long time tidying up this room. Let's do it again, then it will look nice and Daddy will be pleased to hear you've been good." Apparently "I" messages are used a lot in assertiveness training.

Buzz phrases abounded. "I" messages, something called "noticing behaviour", "shaming" and "blaming" — I never knew I was doing so much between the breakfast porridge and the bedtime story. But perhaps that's because I'm not being "respectful" (another parenting buzz word) enough to my three under-fives.

Parenting itself is a hot topic. Making parents responsible for their children's behaviour is the latest idea from the politicians and there are bound to be more as we approach May 1.

East Berkshire Community Health NHS Trust believes it is the first statutory body to offer courses. At just £10 a head, they're within most people's reach. According to the trust, national research shows that 60 per cent of parents would like to attend a course.

Two of the women who finished the East Berkshire course were full of praise for it. Lorna Stewart, an accountant and now a full-time mother of one-year-old Andrew and Matthew, two and a half, was fed up with getting cross.

"I was finding it a bit difficult with the older one who was challenging my authority. He played up when I was changing nappies or breastfeeding the younger one. I was shouting and getting annoyed. I thought, 'there must be better way to deal with this'.

"The course is much more flexible than reading a book, because you feed off each other. I don't have a local network of family and friends at home with children. I can't walk down the street and see six other mothers and children. And the older generation can give you outdated information. I think they relied on smacking or being really hard on their children." Lorna is grateful to have learnt to ignore bad behaviour (unless it's dangerous) and encourage good. "If Matthew throws his Lego into the air now I don't rush in to tell him off. If he's playing quietly with it, I go in and chat about what a good tower he's making, rather than just seeing it as a chance to go and get on with the washing. That way he gets my attention for being good."

Jane Ring gave up her job in the marketing department of a computer firm to be at home full-time with her son Max, who's now three. She has no partner. She says: "You're never really sure if you're doing it right. I have no one to discuss it with. In my house, what I say is right. When Max was two going on three, he turned into a monster, always challenging my authority.

"It's very easy to get carried away in the day-to-day running of life. The course taught me to take more notice of him. I thought: 'I must slow down and give him more time.' He is a person, and the course raised my awareness of that. I wasn't giving him enough respect.

"I learnt to avoid confrontation by giving him choices — limited choices — about what he'd like to do. On the course everyone opened up and I was surprised to discover that everyone shouts at their kids. My only criticism was that it could have been broadened to take account of single parents."

The talk in our session was free and easy. Relationship problems got an airing as well. "The night without TV went well," one woman said. "We talked and we read. It was good." After all if the men won't come onto the course — and they haven't appeared yet — they can expect to be talked about.

Each generation has its own ideas about bringing up children. One woman was bitter about her mother's advice on her second child. "She kept saying: 'Don't keep picking that baby up. You'll spoil him,' and 'If I had him he'd be a different child'. I felt out of control. I was labelling him a problem. My health visitor suggested coming here. I had felt trapped into bringing him up the way my mother wanted. Now I've sorted out what's important and what isn't. And I know that cuddling him isn't going to spoil him."

Parenting courses need to sort out their image. The worst sort of parent is unlikely to enrol but some people think that only bad parents need a course. Judging by my sample, we could all learn something.

The session I attended was a fairly middle-class affair and consisted of seven mothers and two health visitors. We began — you just have to take a deep breath and get on with it — by telling the group one thing we'd like our children to learn from us. Most of us said kindness. I didn't, but then I'm an old hack.

At the end of the session Rachel turned out the lights for our relaxation period, and asked us to close our eyes and imagine holding our youngest child. I expected to feel a total lemon, but found myself smiling down at my absent baby instead.

It's easy to knock the whole idea, of course. The British don't feel at ease with self-conscious self-improvement. Especially if it involves relaxation and role-play. But I decided to try the "I" message with my elder daughter, who usually goes deaf every morning when told — in ever shriller maternal tones — to get dressed for school.

Now I say to her: "I'd like you to get dressed. I want us to be on time for school." And she does it. I may have been saved from the tree stump.

● *Information on the East Berkshire course: 01753 638423. Parent Network is a national charity which runs parenting courses around the country. They cost around £100. For details of your local courses ring 0171-485 8535 for England and Wales and 0131-332 0893 for Scotland.*

MARTIN BEDDALL

Max Ring (left) and Matthew Stewart with their mothers Lorna Stewart, with baby Andrew, and Jane Ring after their parenting course

Ruth Gledhill meets a riotous rector with cause to confess: 'All vicars are failed actors'

A pun-filled Easter message

UNUSUALLY for a church service, the congregation was laughing. A succession of Christmas-cracker style jokes made me wonder whether the youthful rector had missed his true vocation in pantomime. "All vicars are failed actors," he confessed later.

The children had been called to the front and sat at his feet on the chancel steps. "Where is Jesus today?" he asked them. "Behind you," replied one of the boys, pointing at the cross on the altar. The rector jumped, and looked a little taken aback. "In the sky," another child suggested. "At the right hand of God," a third said.

Eggs, the rector suggested, could be related to anything. He invited the children to challenge him. "Chocolate?" one said. "Eggscellent," he replied. "Homework?" said another. "Eggscruciating."

The witticisms continued. "Who was the second person who took the body of Jesus down from the Cross?" the rector asked. That had them stumped. "I'll give you a clue: he was the first Irishman in the Bible." We remained baffled. "Nicodemus," he said, and we tittered.

The spring sunlight poured through the stunning stained glass windows at the east and west ends, creating the feeling of being in a cathedral rather than a parish church. Chatwin, the church's architect, worked with Barry and Pugin at Westminster Abbey and, though the influence of Westminster is tangible, this church was not in London but in Chatwin's home town, Birmingham.

Jocular: the Rev Adrian Newman

We were welcomed by the peal of 16 bells, the first of its kind in the country, but even when there were only half that number the bells of St Martin's were used to drown out of John Wesley as he preached in the Bull Ring outside the church in 1745.

In the 13th century, a smaller church stood on this spot, near the castle of the de Bermingham family, granted a charter for a market by the king. Church and market flourish, though the castle has long gone, replaced by underpasses, flyovers, offices and the bleakest of modern shopping centres. Easter has seen further, predictable challenges to the truth of Christianity, but future generations will surely find the message of the church more credible than the devastation wreaked on Birmingham city centre this century.

The children were sent off to "junior church" and we listened to a woman read from Luke's gospel. On each side, women stood holding candles. We heard how women visited the tomb of Christ and found it empty, apart from dazzling angels, but their report was not believed.

The rector preached on how to recognise the risen Jesus. "For some people it can be through preaching," he said. "For many others it is in the Eucharist, in sharing the bread and the wine."

St Martin's, named after the popular 4th-century Gallic saint who gave half his cloak to a beggar, has recently suffered a mass exodus of its staff. The Rev Adrian Newman, aged 38, arrived only six months ago. Two curates are expected to arrive in the summer, but Mr Newman is still seeking a music director and an associate rector. Standing steady in the wings, keeping things ticking over during this period of change, were two beadles, as the vergers are known at St Martin's.

We prayed for those in hospital, prison, the unemployed and the homeless before singing a traditional Easter hymn, *The head that once was crowned with thorns*, when the collection was taken.

The eucharistic liturgy was beautiful. "From the beginning you have created all things and all your works echo the silent music of your praise," the rector said. "Pour out your Holy Spirit over us and these gifts which we bring before you from your own creation."

The church was crowded and everyone let themselves go for the final hymn, *Thine be the glory*.

As I left the church, Birmingham city centre somehow seemed a little less hideous than it had been when I first arrived.

The Bull Ring is about to be redeveloped, I was told, surely something to make even the most hardened sceptic believe in the possibility of a resurrection.

● *St Martin's-in-the-Bull Ring, Birmingham, West Midlands B5 5BB (0121-454 0119).*

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Even better than the Good Life

A self-sufficiency group of ordinary working people is in rude health, **Sarah Edghill** reports

Tom and Barbara Good of the classic television series *The Good Life* had a pleasant detached house with a neat garden, and Tom left for work every morning wearing a suit. But a few months into self-sufficiency, their cheeks were tanned, their figures trim, the garden resembled the Somme, and the kitchen was piled high with rotting vegetables.

Of course, the Goods weren't really coming at self-sufficiency from the right angle, as Evelyn Green is quick to point out. Mrs Green is chairman of the Meon Valley Self Sufficiency Group, Hampshire, and she is sick of comparisons with the inept Surbiton couple.

"There is more to self-sufficiency than sowing a few packets of seeds in the back garden," she says. Instead, her group's members aim to provide for as many as their food and energy needs as possible, while preserving the old-fashioned aspects of country and village life.

Not surprisingly with BSE and healthy eating in the public mind, a MORI poll this week confirmed that 60 per cent of us would prefer to eat organic food if it were more readily available in supermarkets. Organic product sales are up by a third on last year.

Mrs Green says: "People think we're all a bit loopy but we're just normal, hard-working people who are trying to promote a particular way of life. Our members are aged from their thirties to their eighties, and most have full-time jobs — there are doctors, solicitors, builders and nurses. But we work together, share our skills and promote the best things about country life."

The Meon Valley group was started in 1982 by Joy Pratt, who had been practising her own form of self-sufficiency for 15 years. She put up posters advertising the new group's first meeting and 35 people turned up. The group now has more than 100 members.

Mrs Green admits that, living in the depths of the countryside in the Nineties, it is impossible to be entirely self-sufficient. Electricity and a telephone are essential, as is some form of powered transport. However, the members of this localised collective promote self-sufficiency to varying degrees. Many keep small animals and the group arranges a monthly bulk order for feed.

In recent years the group's annual turnover has been around £35,000, putting it on the same footing as some local full-time farmers. Some members spin their own wool and produce leather goods, and all aim to be self-sufficent in basic vegetables and fruit, although they are at the mercy of the weather and sometimes limited by the type of soil on their land.

However, this is where the group comes into his own: "If you're trying to grow things organically, and not use pesticides, you might lose seedlings because pigeons get them or slugs find a way in," Mrs Green says. "But even if I lose all my lettuces like that, someone down the road might have a couple to spare, which I can exchange for something else."

GEORGE BROOKS

Members of the Meon self-sufficiency group with Ella the pig

Members sell surplus stock at group meetings, and exchange goods and services. At any time the monthly newsletter might offer for sale or exchange anything from muscovy ducklings to fleeces for spinning or goat's milk as well as printing recipes for old-fashioned lemonade and rose petal wine. "It works so well that you don't know it's going on," Mrs Green says. "Then someone mentions that they had a leaking pipe and another member came out and fixed it in exchange for 5lb of honey."

As well as working her land, Mrs Green and her husband need a constant supply of wood for the range that heats their house and for cooking. "This time of year is also one of the busiest because so much preparation needs to be done. Animals are expecting their young and we are planting seeds for the crops we hope will come up later in the year."

Kate and Andrew Goldsmith and their three small children live in Denmead, a village which has grown to the size of a small town. "We are right in the centre by the shops so the bottom of our garden is virtually in the car park, but we manage to do a lot with a small amount of space. About three-quarters of the garden is down to vegetables, and I also keep chickens and rabbits.

"If we need advice on any aspect of self-sufficiency there is always someone around happy to help."

Such work is extremely hard work. "Every night during the summer there is something that needs picking or freezing or turning into chutney," Mrs Goldsmith says. "Even small animals like ours take an hour a day to look after."

Zara Bampton started growing her own fruit and vegetables because she was worried by health scares and wanted her family to eat as well as possible. She is now self sufficient in a wide variety of vegetables, as well as in lamb, beef and poulty. However, with the demands of children aged four and two, she was finding it difficult to devote the necessary time to her land, so now she shares both work and produce with a friend who lives nearby. "Sandra had always wanted to learn more about self sufficiency, but didn't have the confidence to do it on her own," Mrs Bampton says. "We joined up about a year ago, and I have been able to show her how everything works, and she is always on hand to help out if I've got a problem with the children or we want to go on holiday."

The only cloud on the horizon for the entrepreneurs in the Meon Valley is the increase in EC directives. In the early years members dealt with milk surpluses by producing everything from yoghurt and cheese to ice-cream, but increasingly strict hygiene regulations meant many were unable to carry on. "You can no longer sell 'green' milk, as opposed to pasteurised, which precludes some members from sharing homemade produce," Evelyn Green says. "What used to be so easy ten years ago, is now riddled with restrictions. It's a similar story with meat.

"If you take your beasts to an abattoir you aren't guaranteed to get your own meat back, because everything is done *en masse*. Because of that, most members now use home slaughterers; but if an animal is slaughtered at home you aren't allowed to sell the meat, which people used to do to cover some of their costs. Now some people share ownership of a steer, but the European directives have made everything more tricky."

The Meon Valley group won't allow such legalities to restrict their activties, and new members are joining all the time. "Once you've experienced the satisfaction of self-sufficiency, you'll never want to go back to any other way of life," Mrs Green says.

Surbiton never had it so good.

Readers fear country life is threatened by declining numeracy — how will farmers count the moles?

Dilemmas without number

DOWN TO **EARTH**

PAUL HEINEY

Out of a pile of letters received in the last month — thank you — there is one drawing our attention to yet another great rural tradition that is about to disappear down the rathole of technology. This one is of the mind rather than the hands, but no less important. I shall not reveal it at this stage lest you be too shaken to continue reading, but I stress that it is as vital to the numeracy of the nation as any computer/education election promise.

Let me tell you first about a 1930s booklet I have, called *Farm Reckoning*, which was an aid for those having to do sums in their heads. The only flaw in this booklet is that the laws of nature often take precedence over the principles of mathematics. Anyone who grows anything knows that the answer to "how many beans make five?" depends on whether the crows have anywhere to go for breakfast other than the field where you have sown the bean seed. When this booklet poses questions such as, "A small flock of 14 hens laid 2,730 eggs in a year. What was the average annual yield of each bird?" The correct answer is not necessarily the mathematical one. Something along the lines of "all depends" might be nearer the truth.

But Mr Thompson of Holcombe near Bath, Somerset, draws our attention to a more modern threat to rural numeracy. He writes:

Has it occurred to you that the placing of mechanical or electronic scoreboards next to dartboards in pubs will also do away, eventually, with a traditional skill? The most innumerate peasant used to be able — without hesitation — to subtract any number from 301 and announce the possible combinations that would lead to a finish as surely as the expert can in TV darts competitions.

He is, of course, right. Learning to do such calculations was the first step along a bumpy road which eventually leads to a full understanding of the average yield of a small flock of hens. A campaign to eradicate the electronic scoreboard might, therefore, be time well spent. But, more broadly, is the preservation of village life a worthy cause? It is widely assumed that it is, but Sir Neil Pritchard, writing from Daglingworth near Cirencester, Gloucestershire, offers an interesting view. He writes:

The earlier raison d'être *of villages has, of course, disappeared. But it has not left a vacuum; it has been replaced by "commuter settlements, retirement enclaves" etc. without which the village would have been deserted years ago.*

Why should it be assumed that these are evil, nihilistic, giving no new life? I retired to this village 20 years ago: I have been active in many village activities. Is it self-evident that it would have been better for the village if I had been shuffled off to a retirement home elsewhere?

Bringing villages "up to date, injecting new life, facilities and work opportunities" sounds a bit like "make-our-village-a-miniature-town". Is this necessarily a good thing? The future of villages requires serious thought, not woolly-minded shibboleths and clichés which do not acquire validity from repetition.

I offer you that letter in the hope of further suggestions on the revitalisation of villages: no clichés allowed.

Finally, we must return to moles: creatures for which I expressed some admiration at their skilful burrowing and their ability to bring to the surface the crumbliest soil from deep within the tough old land. Meg Kingston writes to me of an invention for catching moles alive and thereby ridding oneself of them, but allowing the mole his freedom to labour elsewhere. She first of all raises a philosophical point when she notes that we always talk of moles invading "our garden" when it is just as much the mole's garden.

Anyway, Mrs Kingston sends me a cutting from her local newspaper which offers a "Live Catch Mole Trap". I rang Nigel Shearing of LongMeadow (the manufacturer) hoping that he had a way of easing my conscience in dealing with the pests. He has. It is a re-invention of a 17th-century trap originally carved of wood. It consists of two tubes with a one-way door at either end. He explained what you do:

Prod the ground with a ¼in rod to find the direction of the mole run. They are usually about 9in deep. With a spade, open up the run and place the trap along it making sure it sits at the bottom of the run and the mole hasn't got to take a step up. There's no need to cover it up.

Here comes the unsavoury bit:

When moles are caught, they get so angry that they pee a lot. What you want to do when you catch your first mole is save a bit of that pee-ed on soil, dry it and save it for future use. Next time you want to catch a mole, place the trap then take a bit of twig and wet the end of it by putting it in your mouth . . .

please be careful to do this in the right order

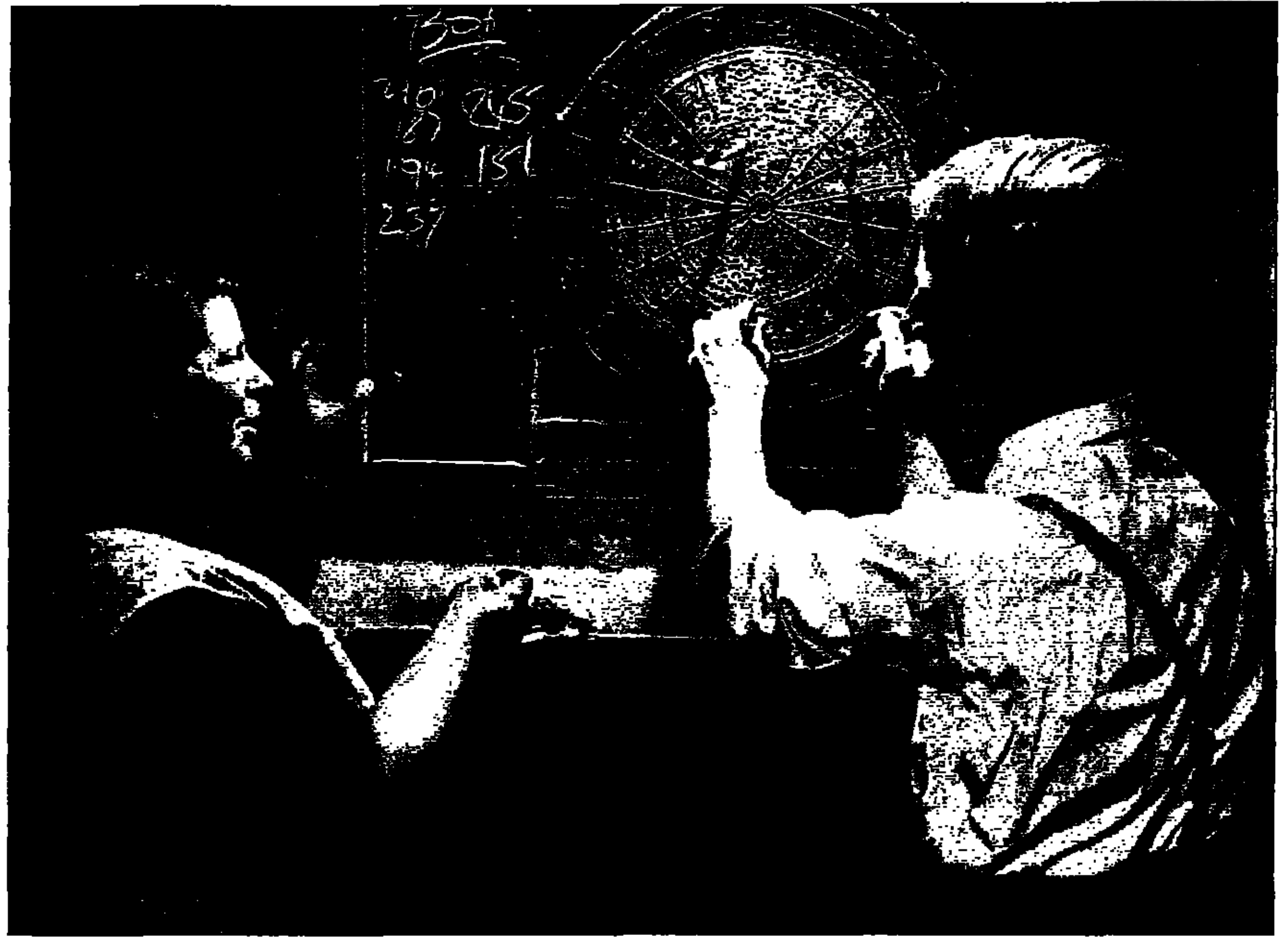
. . . then dip it in the dry, pee-impregnated soil. Then drop the twig in the trap. Moles are aggressive little creatures and if they think another mole has been in their run, they'll charge around and be in the trap before you know where you are. And still alive.

This, of course, raises the question of what to do next. Most towns and villages have recycling sites for newspapers and bottles, but have yet to see a mole bank. Mr Shearing thinks the law allows you to release them anywhere with permission, and due care and attention to the mole's future prospects. An old meadow might be best.

There again, we could turn this into a national debate as to where moles should be sent after being forcibly removed from their homes. Will it necessarily be a better life in a rural environment than it was in those town-like tunnels beneath the vegetable bed? Could a proper consideration of their needs and neighbourhoods lead us to new ideas on our own rural problems of retirement villages, community spirit, unwanted new structures thrown up overnight, and how many moles make five? Let me know.

● *LongMeadow, 01747 828357.*

HULTON DEUTSCH



The traditional rural skill of being able to subtract any number from 301 without hesitation has been undermined

WRITE TO PAUL HEINEY

Reader's letters are welcome on countryside matters of any kind, from wildlife to village life, from people to politics. Letters are featured on the first Saturday of every month

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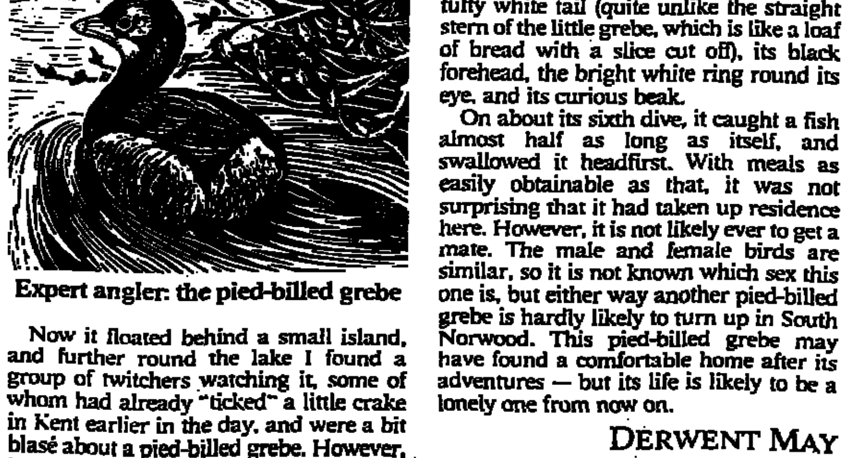
The American blown ashore

FEATHER REPORT

PETER BROWN



Expert angler: the pied-billed grebe

ON EASTER Sunday I saw a rare bird in a somewhat unlikely place. The bird was a pied-billed grebe, and the place was South Norwood Lake in London, just south of Crystal Palace.

I knew the bird was there, and I walked from Crystal Palace station through leafy streets to this public pond, which is in a small park. People were sitting about eating ice-creams, and robins and even a chiffchaff were singing in the flowering prunus trees. At the lakeside I turned my field-glasses hopefully on to several coots and mallards before I saw what I was looking for — a dumpy brown bird floating on the water, with little to remark on except its wedge-shaped white beak with a black stripe down it.

Still, there it was — a pied-billed grebe. If I had been on the other side of the Atlantic I would hardly have looked at it, because it is found throughout the Americas. Here, though, only a few have been recorded, all of them birds which have been blown across the ocean. It was first seen in December, when a local birdwatcher saw it emerge from the mist over the lake. It must have been the shock of his life when he realised this dingy ball of feathers was not a little grebe but a rare transatlantic vagrant.

Now it floated behind a small island, and further round the lake I found a group of twitchers watching it, some of whom had already "ticked" a little crake in Kent earlier in the day, and were a bit blasé about a pied-billed grebe. However, it was to give us a wonderful show.

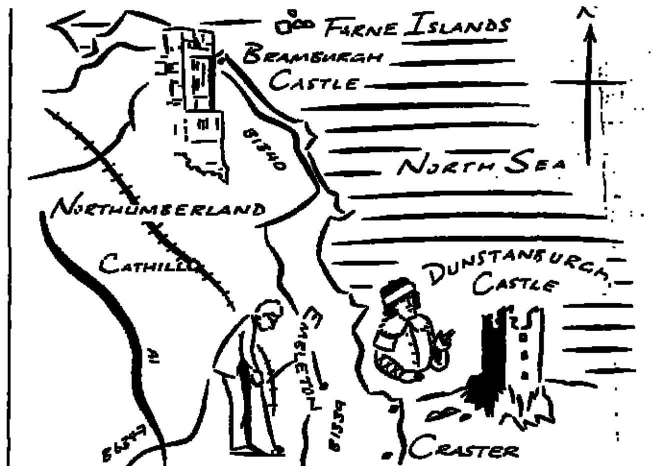
It was evidently quite at home on the lake. It was as indifferent to human beings as it was to the Canada geese who were creating a racket all around it, honking and rearing up and splashing their heads into the water as they courted. After a while it started diving. Now it came close in to the shore and we could see all its distinctive features easily — its tufty white tail (quite unlike the straight stern of the little grebe, which is like a loaf of bread with a slice cut off), its black forehead, the bright white ring round its eye, and its curious beak.

On about its sixth dive, it caught a fish almost half as long as itself, and swallowed it headfirst. With meals as easily obtainable as that, it was not surprising that it had taken up residence here. However, it is not likely ever to get a mate. The male and female birds are similar, so it is not known which sex this one is, but either way another pied-billed grebe is hardly likely to turn up in South Norwood. This pied-billed grebe may have found a comfortable home after its adventures — but its life is likely to be a lonely one from now on.

DERWENT MAY

● **What's about:** *Birders — look out for swallows over water. Twitchers — a surf scoter at Titchwell, Norfolk; a blue-winged teal at Bowling Green Marsh, Devon; a rough-legged buzzard at Dunsop Valley, Lancashire. Details from Birdline 0891 700222. Calls cost 40p a minute cheap rate, 50p at all other times.*

JANE SPENCER



ON THE SPOT: NORTHUMBERLAND

Rural recommendations

The place: Dunstanburgh Castle, near Embleton.

The view: Climb to the top of the gatehouse tower: east, the grey sweep of the North Sea; north, Bamburgh Castle and the Farne Islands; south, the pretty fishing village of Craster.

The appeal: What is more romantic than a ruined castle? Northumberland is crowded with castles but this is the best and most isolated.

Aficionados: Turner was a fan; his are the finest and most majestic views of the castle. Seagulls enjoy the high cliffs that serve as the castle's seaward battlement.

Historical interest: With its walls enclosing 11 acres, it is the largest castle in England. Built in 1313 by Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, it was the stronghold of John of Gaunt (1340-99) after his return from the Hundred Years' War: from here he effectively ruled England.

Time of day/time of year to visit: Winter when the howling winds recall the ghosts of vanished knights. I have gone at midnight, too, when the full moon makes the castle spookily splendid; English Heritage, however, won't let you in at night.

How to get there: No access by car. Park at Craster and walk 1½ miles north along the tops of the dunes, or park at Embleton and walk about the same distance south, first along the deserted white beach, then along the dunes.

OS reference: 260221.

Also nearby: Fine crab sandwiches to be had in the Jolly Fisherman at Craster. Dunstanburgh Castle Golf Course (clubhouse in Embleton) is a fine links course designed by James Braid and is open to non-members.

ERICA WAGNER

THE TIMES & Hatchards

Gardening forum

with Tim Smit and Penelope Hobhouse

READERS are invited to a forum with two of Britain's leading gardeners, Tim Smit and Penelope Hobhouse, on Tuesday, April 15 at 7.30pm at the Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7. Chaired by Stephen Anderton, *The Times* Gardener, the forum marks the publication of Hobhouse's book, *Garden Designs* (Frances Lincoln, £25) and Smit's *The Lost Gardens of Heligan* (Victor Gollancz, £20). Questions will be invited.

Hobhouse, a designer, plantswoman and colourist, will reveal how she has created a range of successful gardens, from a courtyard garden in Paris to one on a windswept Scottish island. Smit, a former archaeologist, record producer and composer, will tell of his discovery and re-creation of the magnificent Victorian gardens at Heligan in Cornwall. Tickets at £10 (concessions for OAPs, students and the unemployed, with ID, £7.50) include £2 off both books, are available by phoning 0171-734 1483, by faxing the coupon below to 0171-494 1313 or 0171-287 2638, by e-mail on 187picc@hatchards.co.uk or by sending the coupon with your remittance to Hatchards, 187 Piccadilly, London, W1V 0LE. Tickets are also available to personal callers at Hatchards.

THE TIMES/HATCHARDS GARDEN FORUM

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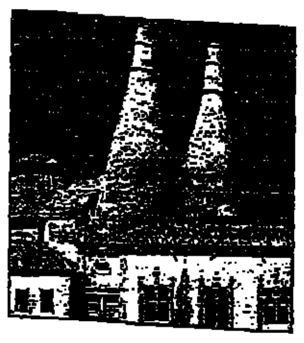


On the trail of Byron in Sintra

Portugal · 20

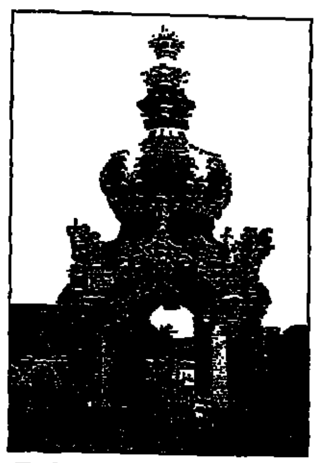
THE TIMES travel

Seafood and walks on the menu

Norfolk · 23

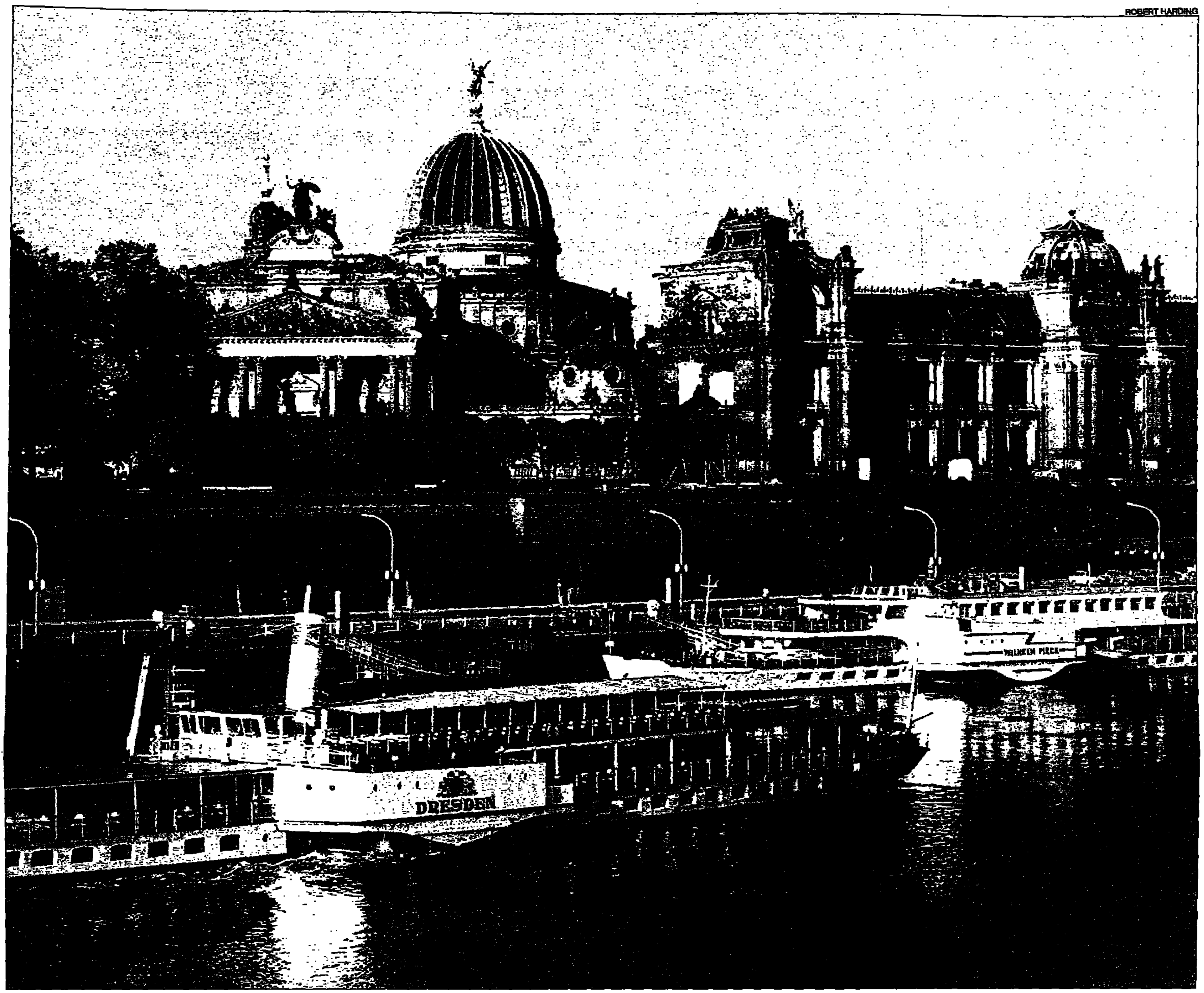
Music for Meissen men – and women

A cruise down the river Elbe reveals a newly restored eastern Europe



Zwinger Palace, Dresden

ROBERT HARDING



Dresden from the Elbe. The city used to be known as "Baroque Florence" and, although it was very heavily bombed during the war, it has been restored to something approaching its former glory

One of the most pleasing sounds to be heard in eastern Germany is the church organ. In the course of three days I visited a church in Torgau where an organist was practising, attended morning service in Wittenberg and an organ concert in Meissen Cathedral. As if in continuing celebration of the end of communism, the people of Meissen gather every day at noon, for about 20 minutes, to listen to the cathedral organ. Organ recitals are also frequently held in the Roman Catholic cathedral in Dresden.

The student of geography will know what else these towns have in common: they are all on the banks of the river Elbe. I was on a seven-day cruise on the *MV Dresden*, downriver as far as Magdeburg, then upstream from Dresden through the mountainous region of "Saxon Switzerland" and into the Czech Republic. We were well looked after and well fed, and if the passing landscape was on occasion uninspiring, there were always herons and storks along the riverbank.

Our first stop was Wittenberg, where almost every historic building commemorates Martin Luther. Catholic visitors to the *Lutherhalle* may feel overwhelmed by the number of pictures and manuscripts in celebration of his life; but the Renaissance-tiled oven which the great man apparently used is an impressive sight. Next door, the curious finger-gabled house occupied by Luther's contemporary, Philip Melanchthon, is now overhung by cranes.

The building work in this part of Germany is another testament to its emergence from the dark night of communism. It is not only new buildings that are going up in every town, but churches and historic monuments that are being restored. Most notably, the great domed Frauenkirche in Dresden, destroyed by bombing in 1945, is being rebuilt at a cost of some £70 million and over a period of ten years. In Magdeburg, which was another victim of Allied "area bombing" at the end of the war, the ruined St Johanniskirche is also to be restored, as a museum, though many wanted it left as a war memorial.

On either side of its bomb-scarred twin towers the soulless monuments to Stalinism — flat-roofed office and apartment blocks — are grotesque. Magdeburg used to be known as the greyest of the grey cities of East Germany: now some of the worst examples of communist construction, such as the featureless rows of one-room flats in the cathedral square — are to be demolished. The cathedral is the largest in eastern Germany, a magnificent Gothic edifice which lost most of its stained glass in the Thirty Years' War but escaped serious damage in 1945. Perhaps it was protected by the spirit of Edith, the English wife of the 10th-century Emperor Otto the Great whose elaborate tomb is behind the altar. Among the remarkable sculptures in the cathedral is a striking wooden memorial, by Ernst Barlach, to the dead of the First World War. In the 1980s it became a focus for prayers for reconciliation and, in 1989, for the peaceful mass demonstrations which preceded the breaking down of the Berlin Wall.

From Magdeburg, capital of Saxony-Anhalt and only 75 miles from Berlin, we turned south to Torgau, where American and Soviet troops met on the banks of the Elbe on April 25, 1945. Here also is the first Protestant church (built in the 1540s and consecrated by Martin Luther) which has recently been given a new organ. The church is within the precincts of a renaissance castle, with a bear pit at its entrance that is once again inhabited by bears.

Having stopped at Meissen — to admire the cathedral, the Albrechtsburg and the glorious rococo porcelain figures of J J Kaendler — our cruise ship returned to Dresden, giving us a day to visit this stunning city.

Despite carpet bombing by the RAF in February 1945, much of historic Dresden — it used to be known as "Baroque Florence" — has been and is still being restored to something approaching its former glory. The Zwinger palace, though badly damaged, was rebuilt soon after the war. Its fabulous art collection had been removed from Dresden for the duration. The opera house was reopened more than a decade ago.

The Residenzschloss (the Palace of the Electors and Kings of Saxony) is now being renovated, and the jewel in Baroque Dresden's crown, the Frauenkirche, will once again dominate the city skyline. It is surely impossible not to be moved by the sight of Dresden today. More than half a century after it was demolished by Allied bombers, blackened stone walls and church towers still bear witness to the terrible firestorm that swept through the city in 1945, killing more than 50,000 people, many of them refugees from the east. Around the ruin of the Frauenkirche, devastated buildings still stand, within yards of a Hilton hotel.

As the ship moved away from the quay, we passed another survivor from the wartime air-raid — one of eight paddle steamers, more than 100 years old, which are still in operation.

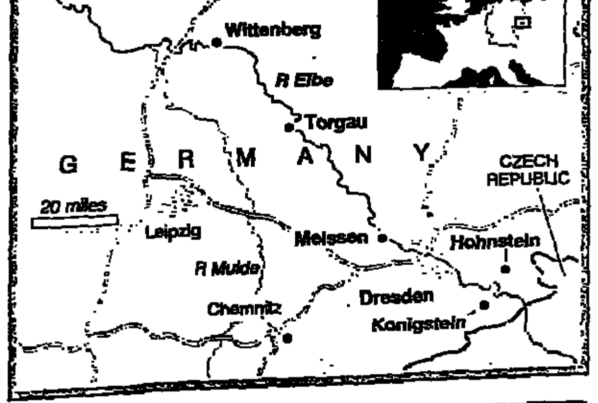
Upstream we came to the grandiose Schloss Pillnitz, which has two "oriental" palaces and an English garden where red squirrels play. It was built for Augustus the Strong by the same architect, Matthaeus Pöppelmann, who designed the Zwinger. Then we were into the strange landscape of Saxon Switzerland — vertical projections of rock and deep gorges.

Wartime memories were never far away: built into a rock above the Elbe, the Königstein fortress, Colditz-like in its appearance, served as a prisoner-of-war camp in both world wars. On the other side of the river, the pretty village of Hohnstein is known as the centre of puppet-making — and as the site of a concentration camp for political detainees in the 1930s.

Our cruise continued a short way into the Czech Republic — the Elbe rises near the Polish border and flows east of Prague — before we turned for home. It was a surprise to learn that we had covered little more than a third of the river's total length of 725 miles. The Elbe is the third longest river of middle Europe (after the Danube and the Rhine): now that it has emerged from behind the Iron Curtain, it is well worth getting to know.

SIMON COURTAULD

● *The author was a guest of Peter Deilmann River and Ocean Cruises.*



ELBE FACT FILE

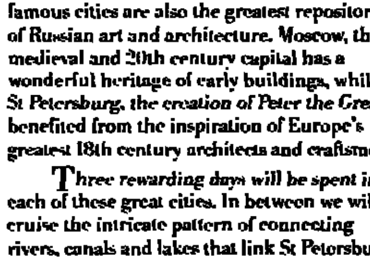
- Bookings through Peter Deilmann River Cruises, Albany House, Suite 404, 324/326 Regent Street, London W1R 5AA (0171-436 2931). Cruises may also be taken on the Danube, Rhine, Main, Moselle, Rhône and Saône rivers.
- A seven-day cruise on the *MV Dresden* costs £1,090 to £1,635 per person sharing an outside twin cabin: an outside triple cabin starts from £908. Prices include return Lufthansa flights from Heathrow, all meals and travel insurance.
- The season lasts from end March to beginning November. The *MV Dresden* cruises run between Hamburg and Dresden. The *MV Dresden* carries about 110 passengers and about 45 crew and staff.
- The Travel Bookshop (0171-229 5260) recommends: *Germany and the Germans*, by John Ardagh (Penguin, £8.99). *Through the German Waterways*, by Philip Bristow (Nautical Books, £9.95). *In Europe's Name*, by Timothy Garton (Vintage, £9.99).

ST PETERSBURG TO MOSCOW BY RIVER

Mother Russia has been blessed with numerous vast rivers, lakes and inland seas which from the earliest of times were the first and natural highways. The adding of canals to these natural assets allow us to travel great distances from the remote forests of Karelya to Moscow and beyond aboard comfortable river vessels which make for a perfect moving hotel.

This 14 night river voyage links the great cities of the Tsars. Russia's two most famous cities are also the greatest repositories of Russian art and architecture. Moscow, the medieval and 20th century capital has a wonderful heritage of early buildings, while St Petersburg, the creation of Peter the Great, benefited from the inspiration of Europe's greatest 18th century architects and craftsmen.

Three rewarding days will be spent in each of these great cities. In between we will cruise the intricate pattern of connecting rivers, canals and lakes that link St Petersburg with Moscow. Having explored the wonders of the city, we will sail through the enchanting countryside with its tranquil and timeless quality which has so inspired writers and musicians over the centuries.



THE MS KRASIN

This sleek, modern river-cruise vessel was built in Germany in 1989 and is under a long term charter to a Californian based company. Unlike many river vessels in Russia the 'Krasin' is only available in the UK and USA. English is the only language used on board, thereby avoiding seemingly endless announcements in other languages. The vessel was completely refurbished in 1995 with quality imported furnishings and the public rooms which include three lounges, bars and a splendid concert hall are the finest afloat in Russia today.

There is accommodation for up to 250 passengers and all cabins have outside views, shower and toilet. Upgraded meals are prepared under the supervision of a Western chef and complimentary wine is served with dinner. The ship is provisioned with Western-style amenities imported from the USA.

THE ITINERARY

DAY 1 London - St Petersburg by scheduled flights. Drive to the MS Krasin and embark.

DAY 2 St Petersburg Morning city excursion including the Peter and Paul Fortress. Afternoon excursion to the great Rococo Palace of Pushkin, built for the Empress Elizabeth.

DAY 3 St Petersburg Morning visit to the Hermitage Museum. Afternoon free. Evening ballet performance at the Hermitage Theatre in the Winter Palace.

DAY 4 St Petersburg Day free until late afternoon sailing.

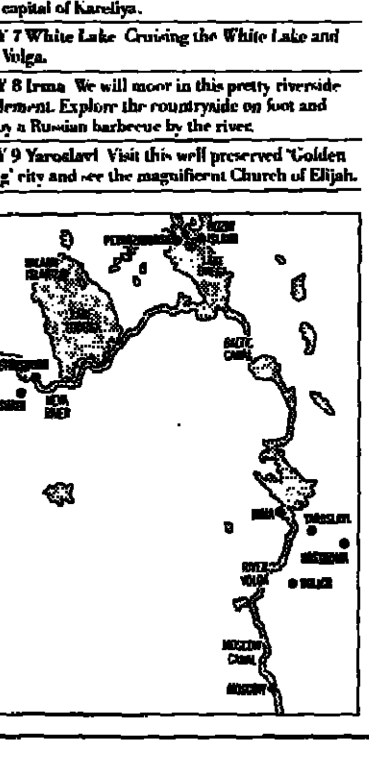
DAY 5 Lake Ladoga A relaxing day cruising across this vast lake.

DAY 6 Kizhi - Petrozavodsk Today we will sail across Lake Onega, making a stop at the beautiful island of Kizhi. Visit the imposing 22 domed Church of the Transfiguration, a marvel of 18th century Russian wooden architecture. In the evening we will make a call at Petrozavodsk, the capital of Kareliya.

DAY 7 White Lake Cruising the White Lake and the Volga.

DAY 8 Irma We will moor in this pretty riverside settlement. Explore the countryside on foot and enjoy a Russian barbecue by the river.

DAY 9 Yaroslavl Visit this well preserved 'Golden Ring' city and see the magnificent Church of Elijah.



DAY 10 Kostroma One of the loveliest cities of the 'Golden Ring' and home to the noble families of Godunov and Romanov.

DAY 11 Uglich A delightful 'Golden Ring' city, its skyline is dominated by the blue and gold cupolas of the cathedral.

DAY 12 Moscow Morning on the Moscow Canal. Arrive Moscow at lunch time. Afternoon city drive. Evening visit to the Moscow Circus.

DAY 13 Moscow Morning visit to the Kremlin including the fine collection of imperial regalia in the Armoury Museum. Afternoon free.

DAY 14 Moscow Morning excursion to Sergiev Posad. Afternoon free. Evening concert.

DAY 15 Moscow Disembark in the morning. Time for shopping and individual sightseeing. After lunch continue to airport for late afternoon departure to London.

1997 DEPARTURE DATES

25 May; 8* June; 13 July
27† July; 31 August; 14* September

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* These departure dates operate in reverse order sailing from Moscow to St Petersburg.

† This date also operates in the reverse order from Moscow to St Petersburg and is one day shorter (1 night less in St Petersburg). Deduct £70 per person from all grades.

Price includes: Economy class air travel, accommodation and full board on the MS Krasin, wine with dinner, shore excursions, entrance fees, ballet and concert performance and a visit to Moscow Circus, port taxes, UK departure tax, local guides, Guest Speaker and Cruise Director.

Not included: Travel insurance, Russian visa, optional excursions, tips to crew.

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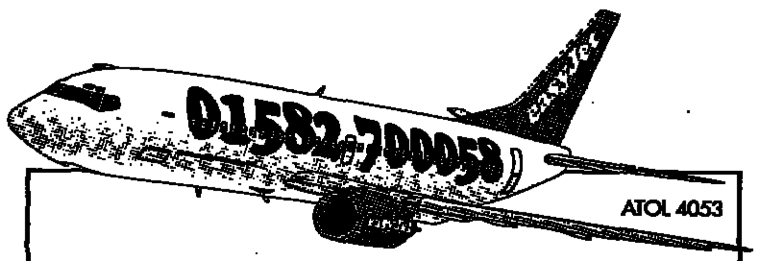

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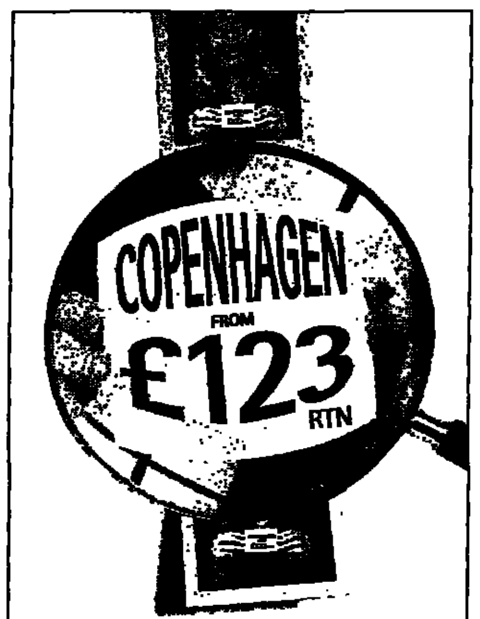

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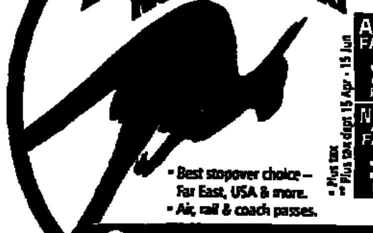

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AROUND THE WORLD: A WEEKEND GUIDE

Reef study with Raleigh

THE youth development charity Raleigh International (0171-371 8585) is looking for 17 to 25-year-old volunteers for its ten-week expeditions working on environmental and community projects in Belize, Chile, Malaysia, Namibia and Uganda.

In the International Year of the Reef, teams who will have completed preliminary sub-aqua training in the UK will join marine scientists on underwater research programmes to help protect one of the world's largest coral reefs off Belize.

In Namibia, volunteers help on school building projects, while the Uganda expedition involves work on health centres in rural areas.

Participants are expected to attend a selection weekend, and raise about £2,950 towards the expedition costs with support from Raleigh.

IMAGE BANK

Raleigh International is looking for people to join marine scientists on underwater research to help to save coral reefs off Belize

Amazonian adventures

A RAINFOREST holiday staying as the guest of a family who have set up an ecological reserve in the Amazon (£695 for seven days) is offered by Imaginative Travellers (0181-742 8612) in its South American programme for the truly adventurous.

Other unusual trips include an Inca Trail Tour, camping in less well-known sites (£575 for eight days) and a 16-day (£855) Hidden Ecuador Tour, visiting "Cloud Forests", volcanoes, markets and swimming holes. You stay in basic hotels, hostels and palm tree huts, and travel by local bus, train and on foot, with porters or llamas carrying the luggage.

There are opportunities to go riding, rafting and biking on most of the trips. Meals, entrance fees and local transport are included in the price, but not international flights.

NOT AS part of an ecological programme, but to celebrate a wedding, honeymooners at the Pangkor Laut Resort in Malaysia can take part in a tree-planting ceremony in the rainforest, with their names inscribed on a plaque which is placed on the tree. Offered by Asiaworld (01932 820050), the seven-night B&B holiday on a private island costs £2,152 per couple, including flights.

Horse talk

TWO NEW riding holidays from Andalucia Trails (01892 730706) are based around local festivals in May.

The seven-night Jerez Feria centres on Europe's largest horsefair, with half the holiday spent riding on beaches, old drover trails and into the Sierra de la Plata, the rest joining in the celebrations and sherry sampling at the fair itself. The cost is £595, fares excluded.

On the 14-day El Rocio Ride, holidaymakers ride along with other pilgrims on horseback, in covered wagons or on foot, on the traditional "Romeria", following an ancient trail through the Coto Donana Nature Reserve to El Rocio for the Feast of the Virgin of Rocio. Picnics, dancing and feasting round campfires are part of the fun. The cost is £1,295 (£1,095 for non-riders), fares excluded.

THE Youth Hostel Association (YHA) is looking for people over 18 who are able to work from April to October in its 240 hostels. No qualifications are required apart from an ability to deal with the public and assist with catering and clerical work. The pay is £335 a month, plus full board and accommodation. Details from the YHA (01629 822074).

Irish sights

CIE Tours International (0990 143910) is offering one free flight to every two holidaymakers who book before April 30 on its new eight-day Hidden Ireland coach tour between May and September. The itinerary includes sightseeing in Dublin and visits to the Guinness Brewery before heading south to Galway, Killarney and the National Stud Farm. The price is from £620.

If you prefer travelling at a slower pace, Stena Line (0990 747474) can set you up with a gypsy-style caravan and an Irish draught-cross mare of guaranteed sunny temperament, oats, instruction and suggestions for overnight stays at country pubs or farmhouses. The cost for a week is from £338, which also includes ferry crossings for a car, two adults and a child.

LATEST election hideaway from Kuoni (01306 740500) is the Robinson Crusoe "no news, no shoes" island of Ari Beach, one of the most remote atolls in the Maldives where you sleep in thatched huts with open showers and spend your days in a hammock swinging between palm trees on the beach, occasionally exerting yourself enough to go night fishing or diving among spectacular tropical fish. The price in May is £703 half-board for a week, including flights.

Florida homes

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On the six-mile long Captiva Island, clapboard stilt houses are a short boardwalk from the beach through tropical foliage. They cost from £689 for each of five sharing for a week. Other quaint mansions are available in Sanibel, Naples and Marco Island.

In Key West, Conch Homes cost from £699 for each of five people. Prices include flights and basic car hire (with compulsory "extras").

Château nights

KEYTEL International (0171-402 8182), which acts as UK agent for the paradors in Spain and pousadas in Portugal, now also represents 450 châteaux throughout France.

Comforts and costs vary from approximately Fr300-Fr1,200 (£35-£140) per double room per night. A room for two in the Château du Roc Chautru in Perigueux costs Fr259-Fr500 (£30-£59): at the Château Scandaillac in Bergerac a night costs between Fr500-Fr560 (£59-£66) and from Fr410-Fr995 (£48-£117) in the Château Pi al Lannec in Brittany's Trebeurden.

THOSE staying near La Pera, about 20 miles from Gerona in northeast Spain, can now visit the recently reopened Castillo de Pubol, where Dali spent his final years with his wife Gala. Decorated in surrealist style with some of the couple's original furniture, the castle is open until October from 10.30am to 7.30pm and in November until 6pm. Admission is 600 pesetas (about £2.50) per person. Details from the Spanish National Tourist Office (0171-499 0901).

And so to work

WORKING holidays on National Trust properties this summer involve conservation work and construction projects using ancient and traditional skills.

At Ludshott Common in Surrey, the warden needs help to improve the habitat for protected birds, while on the Marsden Moor Estate in West Yorkshire, fit volunteers are needed to work on moorland restoration, heather and grass seed propagation, bracken control and footpath maintenance.

Prices average £50 for a week, £20 for a short break to cover accommodation and meals. For details call the NT Brochureline (0891 517751). Calls are charged at 50p per minute.

On a budget

ALTHOUGH there is now no UK-based reservation agency for the budget Formule 1 hotel chain, a list of the 431 Formule 1 and Etap hotels worldwide is available by phone (0181-741 1001) or from the French Government Tourist Office on its France Information line (0891 244123). Calls are charged at 50p a minute.

Modern and strictly functional with a double bed, single bunk and wash basin (but no shower or WC), colour television and alarm clock, Formule 1 rooms cost Fr119, Fr129 and Fr139 (£14, £15.20 and £16.35) for one, two or three people. Continental breakfast costs Fr22 (£2.60).

Italy on the cheap

TRAVEL NEWS

WITH THE ITALIAN lire continuing to fall, package companies specialising in Italy are pressing its claims as somewhere to make holiday spending money go a long way. Magic of Italy, for example, says that a typical holidaymaker in Florence would spend only 80p on an ice-cream compared with £2.60 if he were in Paris; £5.60 on a pizza meal with a beer compared with £10.40; and £17 on a three-course meal compared with £26.

TOUR OPERATORS are considering applying for a judicial review of the 17.5 per cent Premium Tax on holiday insurance sales through travel agents and tour operators.

Desperate lobbying by the industry failed to persuade Parliament in its dying days to amend the plans, which means that the tax on insurance policies bought through agents will be 13.5 per cent higher than those bought through brokers, banks or building societies.

The imposition is unlikely to be a priority for whichever party wins the election so an appeal to the courts is now seen as the only way to have it withdrawn.

TWENTY of Britain's attractions are offering Granny-free days during summer.

Mindful that grandparents are now taking more responsibilities for child-care, the British Association of Leisure Parks, Piers and Attractions is offering free admission when accompanied by a parent and child(ren).

The offer is valid on midweek days until July 18.

Those taking part are: Banham zoo: Blackpool Pleasure Beach; Blackpool Tower; Brean leisure park in Burnham, Somerset; Crealy Park, Exeter; Dinosaur World, Colwyn Bay; Drayton Manor park and zoo, Staffs; Dreamland Fun Park, Margate; Flamingoland, Malton, N. Yorks; Frontierland, Morecambe Bay; Funland and Laserbowl, London; Grand Parade, Eastbourne; Lightwater Valley Park, Ripon; Loudon Castle, Ayrshire; Mumbles Pier, Swansea; New Metroland, Gateshead; Paradise Wildlife Park, Herts; Peter Pan's Adventure Playground, Southend; Pleasureland, Southport; Rollerworld, Colchester; Segaworld, London; Twycross zoo, Atherstone; West Midland safari & leisure park, Wicksteed leisure park, Kettering.

Holidays by the book

Derwent May on the latest guides, from B&B to backpacking

Karen Brown must be one of the most indefatigable travellers of all time. She and her team have visited small hotels and bed-and-breakfasts around half of Europe and most of California, and have produced a series of neat, clear guidebooks giving their recommendations, to all of which they append the label "charming".

For example, they have an *Italy: Charming Inns and Itineraries* and an *Italy: Charming Bed and Breakfasts*. The first gives maps of enjoyable routes, such as a winding trail through the northern lakes and mountains from Aosta to Venice, and follows it up with details and line-drawings of attractive hotels. The second has no itineraries, but picks out cheap B&Bs such as a farm near Orvieto with views of the Umbrian valley, and a farm outside San Gimignano where breakfast on the patio is served by "jovial hostesses".

Others in the series are France, which has two books with similar titles to Italy: England, Wales and Scotland together, with "Charming Hotels and Itineraries"; and England on its own with "Charming Bed and Breakfasts". There are also inns and itineraries — all charming, too — for Ireland, Spain and California. (All titles Travel Press, £9.99.)

In the Rough Guide series is *First-Time Europe* by Louis CasaBianca (Penguin, £7.99), a hard-headed account of such things as money belts, thefts on trains, alcohol and Euro-toilets. Romance creeps in here and there. *Far Horizons: Adventure Travel For All* by Walt Unsworth (Cicerone Press, £8.99) sets out a tempting panorama of jungles, deserts, islands, and long-distance walks such as the King Ludwig Way in Bavaria.

Rock and Roll Traveler USA by Tim Perry and Ed Glinert (Fodor's, £12.99) guides fans not only to the music venues of New York and Los Angeles, but also to historic street corners and Irish whiskey bars, and even the place where Janis Joplin hit Jim Morrison over the head with a bottle of Southern Comfort. *Backpacking in Mexico* by Tim Burford (Bradt, £11.95) leads you through the silver mines and the rattlesnakes. *Europe By Train 1997* by Katie Wood (Ebury, £10.99) is a fat book on lightweight paper that tells you not only how to get there but also what you will find when you do.

The Ordnance Survey has provided the maps for *A Guide to Garden Visits* by Judith Hitching (Michael Joseph, £12.99), which suggests 50 visits to places in Britain with good gardens. The author also recommends attractive hotels. *American Walks in London* by Richard Tames (Windrush Press, £9.99) has ten step-by-step itineraries through London that could be followed with pleasure by anybody — Lord Rosebery and Thomas Arne come into it, as well as Woodrow Wilson and Sidney Bechet. Going the other way, the new Blue Guide *Museums and Galleries in New York* by Carol von Pressentin Wright (Black, £17.99) is splendidly informative and up-to-date.

For France there is a richly illustrated handbook to *The Loire Valley* (Everyman Guides, £16.99), and one of the most specialised guides I have met, *Around and About Paris: The 13th-20th Arrondissements* by Thirza Vallois (Iliad, £15.95). This takes you through Hausmann's Paris, bringing its history to life in a wealth of detail, just as the author did for her earlier books on arrondissements 1-7 (inner Paris) and 8-12 (the Paris that expanded after the Revolution). This volume leads you to many of the "secret places" of Paris, from the old vineyard of Vaugirard to the couscous restaurants of Belleville.

More thoughts on Jules Verne

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A LETTER from a disgruntled couple who took a Voyages Jules Verne holiday to Cuba provoked a flurry of response when printed in Weekend two weeks ago. The Glazers, of Hertfordshire, changed hotels at their own expense, citing filthy rooms and no hot water. Their flight was also 13 hours late. VJV replied that local advice was that the company switch hotels and suggested the couple may have been unsuited to Cuba.

A selection of other letters received included one from Lady Engle, of London N6: "We also travelled with Jules Verne to Cuba. The flight took 18 hours instead of nine as stated in its brochure. Changes of two out of the three hotels advertised had to be accepted without demur. A third-class firm in a time warp?"

From Sir Patrick Salt, Bury St Edmunds: "The journey to Cuba was horrific especially as we had been misled over the length of flight and the number of stops en route. Who would dream of going to Cuba from the UK via Costa Rica? Jules Verne takes your money and then refuses to accept responsibility for the ensuing chaos."

From P. Block, London NW11: "The Glazers are not the only ones that have complained to Jules Verne but at least they have had some sort of reply. The time from reporting at Gatwick to arrival at the hotel was 25½ hours. On arrival, we were told we had no reservations. We did not see the rep until our departure a week later. To blame the Cubans is quite wrong."

From Keith and Margaret Wilkes of Kippax, near Leeds: "We visited Cuba for two weeks with Sunworld. We had a first-class guide, driver and coach, hotels, room, catering and service. Our chalet was spotlessly clean with all amenities, plenty of hot water, linen and towels changed regularly. The food was plain but with a large choice. I felt safer than in Italy — I would recommend Cuba to anyone."

From I.A. McCallum of Bridge of Weir, Renfrewshire: "We arranged to do a trip to the Royal Cities of Rajasthan on December 24. On the 18th we were told the itinerary had been changed, giving us no alternative — it turned out to be a disaster. Jules Verne had the temerity to say the accommodation was as advertised. They will not accept they are in the wrong. We are applying through the small [claims] courts for compensation."

From Sheilagh and John Jukes of Cumnor, near Oxford: "We have recently returned from a VJV tour of the Royal Cities of Rajasthan and have nothing but praise for the way the trip was organised. We were informed of changes to the schedule well before the departure date. Hotels had been upgraded and the ambitious programme for a 14-day tour covering 1,600 miles ran like clockwork."

From J.G. Greenly of Wolverhampton: "My wife and I have been on six holidays with VJV and on only one was there a change to the original dates — we were offered either our money back or transfer to another holiday. It may be that the couple who complained would have been happier with a more developed place like Florida."

● *We welcome letters on holiday travel. Send them to: Letters, Travel Department, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN or fax 0171-782 5124.*

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The Antipodes: Southern Australia has untouched bush, dusty roads and empty, golden beaches …

Stroke a euro, grow a yacka

ADELAIDE

LEAVING Heathrow airport close to midnight on the first day of the month, I arrive at Adelaide, South Australia, 24 sleepless hours later at six in the morning of the third day, feeling spectral. At the airport, I am met by a smiling chauffeur behind the wheel of a 1950s stretched Chevrolet, a gigantic machine which whirls me into town. I check in at the Hilton hotel and eat a second unnecessary breakfast, then take a dazed stroll in the dazzling sun.

The streets are wide, laid out in a grid by the far-seeing Colonel Light in the 1830s. Traffic runs smoothly; there are no jams. Public buildings, such as the town hall, are unmistakably British colonial; other buildings form a mini-Manhattan. Local heroes deemed statue-worthy are explorers, such as Charles Sturt. The pace on the streets is unhurried. There are few men in suits. I return to the hotel and lie down on the bed. It is 11 o'clock and I feel obstinately wakeful. The next I see of my watch it tells me I have been asleep for more than five hours.

BAROSSA VALLEY

UP AT 7.30 the next day, feeling disconcertingly normal. Rae Grierson, from the travel company Fruits of Inheritance, picks me up and drives me to the Barossa, an hour away.

This is where the wine comes from, including Jacob's Creek, Britain's favourite Aussie tipple, alas not my family vineyard. The Barossa is green, toiled over, lived-in, ripe. We pick our way through wineries, sampling as we go. After not much of this I am unsure whether it is renewed jet lag or booze that is making me groggy.

We have lunch at an excellent small restaurant; £5 for a main course that would cost three times as much at home. I settle for chicken in pastry but nibble at somebody else's kangaroo. This, I am told, should be compared to a piece of well-hung Charollais beef: it lacks fat and is good for your cholesterol level. After a few more experiments I find I do not much like "native" foods, such as emu pâté, except for the fish (especially whiting) and the fruit and vegetables, which are magically robust, big and fresh.

On the way back to Adelaide we pause on a hilltop and look down at the valley. It is Germanically neat, which is not surprising because the church spires are Lutheran and the village is formed on a German pattern, with houses side by side and cultivated land laid out in long strips behind them. The valley looks as if it had been lived in for ever. But the Germans have been here barely 150 years.

MURRAY RIVER

A DROP OF rain falling into this river in Queensland will take five months to reach the Southern Ocean, a few miles downstream from where I board the *Proud Mary* for a short cruise. The Murray is part of one of the world's largest river systems. But, shame on me, I have never heard of it. It is broad, muddy, willow-banked. Fish rise and sulphur-crested cockatoos squawk raucously. Pelicans flap by expressionless. Water skiers swoosh along.

My cabin is comfortable but too small for more than one person to dress in. All passengers are issued with name badges. We display first names only, out of respect for Australian mateyness, a style of behaviour I rather like.

We take a bus trip and embark on a non-energetic walk to some waterfalls. Our guide, Paul, points out the difference between trees and plants that live in or near the water and others that live on the (usually very) dry land. Trees that would die standing in water have learnt not to, and have learnt to survive long dry seasons as well.

It seems the craggy landscape was, half a billion years ago, a mountain range as high as the Himalayas. Erosion continues. That tall, waisted rock over there will one day be worn through and the top half will topple down to join all the other boulders scattered about. But I shall not be here to see it. At the end of our walk Paul tells us we have seen at least eight varieties of bird and 16 trees and plants.

After dark we get back on the tour bus, now equipped with a lamp for spotlighting wombats. They seem to me an unattractive, pig-like creature, often scarred from fighting over females, but the old ladies aboard "ooh" and "aah" as though the wombats were cuddly cats. Caught in the light, the wombats stumble about foolishly or scuttle down their burrows. In the distance I see my first kangaroos. Paul tells us a kangaroo with two "joeys" in her pouch can provide them with different milks to suit their maturity. I imagine a row of taps, as on a pub counter.

AUSTRALIAN PICTURE LIBRARY

On the sheep stations, as farms are called, the "paddocks" are fields of several thousand acres where the only way to get around is by bike or truck

PORTEE STATION

IAN CLARKE meets me off the boat and drives us to his station, as farms here are called. The wool market is in poor shape. What it needs, I hear, is another world war, so we can all get back into khaki. Failing that, the Clarkes have diversified into hospitality, restoring their home and adding a kitchen and a dining room/sitting room. There is a chef. We eat hogget in considerable style.

In the morning Ian takes me on a boat trip through the creek at the bottom of his garden, out through a lagoon into the Murray River, circling back to the creek through another lagoon. Ian's creek is a genuine billabong: though fed from the river, it never dries up. I hope I have at least this bit of Oz lore right.

Later we drive through Ian's paddocks, as he calls fields of several thousand acres. I am beginning to realise that the plant and animal life in the two environments — river and land — are completely different.

Ian, I notice, carries a gun in his truck. Why? To shoot kangaroos and stray (feral) dogs. The dogs kill the sheep and the kangaroos eat their grass. We see no dogs but several kangaroos. The first two or three Ian poops off at hop away into trees. But, firing from the driver's seat, he gets a line on a kangaroo that is slower off the mark. We drive closer and Ian puts a last shot through its head. He gets out with a knife in one hand, a steel in the other. He cuts up the dead animal and throws the pieces in to the truck. Back at the station they are fed to a bunch of pups.

ARKAROOLA

AS THE little plane flies north from Adelaide and the coast, green fields become great brown stretches of desolation, crossed by meandering dry river beds and occasional straight, untarred, empty roads. I suppose I must have known that Australia is very big and very dry; even that these are the two things that define the nature of the place. But you have to see it, preferably from 7,000ft, to realise just how big and how dry.

Nearly 500 kilometres from take-off we land at an unmanned airstrip and motor on to Arkaroola. This is a mountain range, a huge private property dedicated to conservation. We take a long drive through the range in an open truck where we see all kinds of things. I could go on about these but will mention only two: a small variety of kangaroo called a euro (yes, really) and a plant called a yacka. This is not much to look at, reminding me rather of a fat pipe-cleaner sticking out of a bunch of leaves, but I am told it grows at the rate of 18 inches every 100 years. So some I am looking at must be 300 years old or more.

In the bouncing truck I am so busy keeping the hat on my head and the sun off it that I fail to bother about the hands that are holding the hat down. They fry, or perhaps boil, and by the morning are seriously swollen. But they don't hurt.

CURDIMURKA

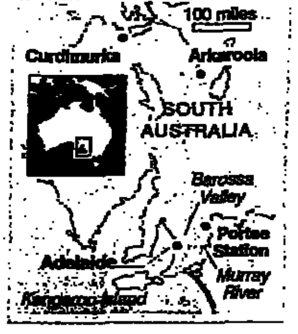
AIRBORNE again in the little plane, we head for Curdimurka, a patch of aridity straddling an old railway line where there is to be, improbably enough, a ball, for which I have dragged my dinner jacket all this way. Dropping into places by plane is getting to be a casual experience, like stopping at a garage or supermarket. We join maybe 30 planes on the Curdimurka strip: Across the railway line from the airstrip, a tented camp has arisen. Perhaps 4,000 people have come, mostly by road, bringing their tents and campers with them. Queues for showers form at a huge truck. The toilets are of the improvised variety, i.e., horrid, smelly holes in the ground. I am awarded a place in a tent for two and a swag (sleeping bag).

Darkness falls. I struggle into my dinner jacket, eat a barbecued dinner and ride in an open wagon a few hundred yards up the railway line to the ball. There is a large springy dance floor, soon covered by swaying, gyrating, slightly manic people of all ages. Alongside the floor is a platform from which the night's chief entertainer, surrounded by a deafening corps of musicians, is belting out songs that sound vaguely familiar. He is Patrick MacMahon and is, I learn, a Neil Diamond singalike. My sense of unreality increases. Here I am, out in the desert and all dressed up, a million miles from anywhere familiar, and I am watching not a singer but

Continued on next page

FACT FILE

- Singapore Airlines' return flights to Adelaide, from London or Manchester, start at £649 in low season (April 16-June 15) and are available through the long-haul specialist Austravel (0171-734 7755). The airline occasionally runs special offers. Information from its reservations line (0181-747 0007). Ground arrangements are all bookable through Austravel.
- Adelaide Hilton, £50 per person a night, based on twin share. Room only.
- A two-night/three-day Murray River cruise on board the *Proud Mary* paddle-steamer, costs £260 per person, based on twin share, including all meals, shore excursions and activities.
- Portee Station, Blanchetown, from £58 per person a night, based on twin share, and including breakfast and three-course dinner.



- Arkaroola Tourist Resort, Northern Flinders Ranges. £45 per person a night twin share. Room only.
- Kangaroo Island Odysseys (wildlife safaris), with Anna Howard, cost £264 per person for a two-day, one-night tour, based on twin share.
- Barossa Valley, Lanzerac Country Estate, from £45 per person per night, based on two sharing, including dinner and breakfast.
- Barossa Valley, self-drive wine touring to the Barossa. A four-day/three-night round trip from Adelaide, including rental car and accommodation, from £128 per person, based on two travelling together.
- For general information on holidaying in South Australia, call the Aussie Helpline on 0990 022000).
- Reading: *Manning Clark's History of Australia*, by Manning Clark (Pimlico, £15). *Cooper's Creek*, by Alan Moorehead (Penguin, £6.99). *South Australia*, by Denis O'Byrne (Lonely Planet, £8.99).

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… while the North Island of New Zealand has vast, thriving farms and cities with metropolitan chic

WORLD PICTURES

Russell Pier, jutting out into the tranquil waters of the Bay of Islands, was not always so serene. It has a steamy past. As the country's first capital, Russell was a brawling, bawdy port described as "the hell-hole of the Pacific"

Continued from page 18

his doppelgänger. I marvel at the willingness of Australians to toil after their pleasures. *These are people who will* drive 200 kilometres for lunch. Only the Irish can match their *pursuit of good times.*

KANGAROO ISLAND

HERE, another short plane-ride from Adelaide, is South Australia in a nutshell. There are *dusty roads*, stretches of untouched bush and empty, golden beaches. Sheep graze *in what might be English* meadows if it were not for the koalas above them in the trees. We come across a team of conservationists plotting the spread of the koala population by satellite and computer. *It* seems there are too many of them. They strip trees bare and make life hard for other animals and birds. So they will have to be culled.

I see penguins noisily set*tling down for the night* after a day feeding at sea, and wallabies hopping by. A kangaroo *allows itself to be stroked and*, at a picnic, one wallaby even accepts a slice of avocado. Huge sea lions stretch out on a beach. One little fellow toddles anxiously among them looking for its mother. He tries to cuddle up to one but is snapped at, and waddles away. We humans are kept at *a distance so we will not* disrupt their ancient colony.

Flying home, I ruminate on *why Australians have caught* the heritage bug. Every shack in the outback seems to be *being tarted up* and touted as a site of historic interest. But Australia's real history is in its pre-history, in the creation of its landscape and the slow evolution of its plants and trees and animals — and in its *Aboriginal peoples, of whom I* have seen almost nothing (apart from one man waving a beer can enthusiastically at the Neil Diamond singalike).

I find myself wishing that Australia would devote more of its energies to preserving, say, the several varieties of kangaroo that are dying out and less to propping up the vanity of Europeans' interest in their own brief occupation of the land. My peevishness about this on getting home is a dozen times intensified by jet lag, which is fearsome.

ERIC JACOBS

● *The writer was a guest of Singapore Airlines and the South Australia Tourism Commission*

AP

On Kangaroo Island excess koalas are being culled

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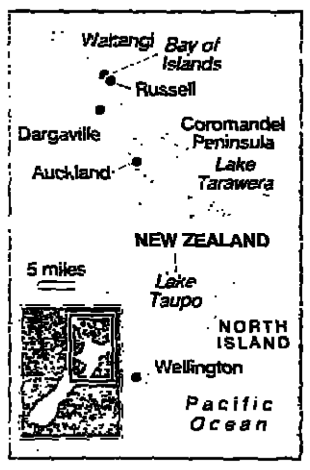


NEW ZEALAND FACT FILE

- *Silk Cut Travel, Meon House, College Street, Petersfield, Hampshire* GU32 3JN. Reservations and Tailor Made inquiries, 01730 265211. Air New Zealand, 0181-846 9595.
- *Tim Heald took a trip with Silk Cut Travel's* (01730 230370) *new* programme to New Zealand, which focuses on accommodation in private homes, working farms and lodges. Sixteen-night fly-drive *packages start from £2,128 per person (April 1 to June 30) based on two* sharing. The price includes return scheduled flights from London Heathrow to Auckland with Air New Zealand, farm-stay accommodation on a half-board basis and car hire. Executive-stay fly-drives, accommodation with families in private homes, start from £2,768 per person *(April 1 to June 30).*
- New Zealand Tourism Board, New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket, London SW1Y 4TQ (0171-839 0360).
- *Reading: Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (£20) and *The Oxford Book of New Zealand* (£7.99), both by Keith Sinclair (OUP). *New Zealand Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £12.99). *Mobil Guide to New Zealand* (Heinemann, £14.99).

Between Auckland and *the Bay of Islands*, along the sometimes unsealed road which runs through Dargaville, the centre of New Zealand's Dalmatian community, stands all that is left of the great kauri *forests which covered the land* before the loggers came from Europe and laid them waste. *The greatest individual survi*vor is Tane Mahuta or "God of the Forest", a 2,000-year-old tree which, *according to Maori* lore, is the son of the All Sky Father and the Earth Mother. *It is* certainly a big tree — nearly 140ft tall and almost 40ft in girth.

By the roadside nearby, a signpost advises: "You are in the heart of a small remnant of Earth's most ancient eco-systems. Breathe deeply and tread softly." Standing in the presence of a living object which was a *sapling during* the life of Christ, I was inclined to do just that: Tane Mahuta *certainly made a century and* a half of Western civilisation in these remote islands seem *puny by comparison.*

Later, I read in the *North and South* magazine that the *postwar generation* of New Zealanders are just hitting the 50-year mark, 47,524 of them *born in 1946 alone.* "*In our* time," the author wrote, "New Zealand has been transformed *from a green and sleepy* overprotected agricultural economy to a rambunctious South *Pacific casino.*"

Tane Mahuta and the "rambunctious casino" seemed light years apart and yet, *travelling from top to toe of the* North Island, I saw enough metropolitan chic and raw wilderness to suspect that there was room for both.

My first image of New Zealand was an obviously outmoded one of butter and sheep, Sir Edmund Hillary and the All Black rugby forward Colin Meads. I was aware of Kiri Te Kanawa (whose appearance in *Don Giovanni was a sell-out dur*ing my visit). Kerry Hulme and the Booker prize-winning *The Bone People*. Katherine Mansfield and Ngaio Marsh, but they paled before my sense of rugged farmers and VC-winning Anzacs.

In a tour just over a week long I stayed only one night in a large hotel, and even that was a complex of *timber* cabins set around a "lodge" in thick bush at the foot of the Coromandel peninsula. The rest *of the time* I *was in* accommodation of a less impersonal kind, ranging from urban B&B or "boutique hotel" *to two rural* "farm stays", where one ate with the family and slept in their spare room.

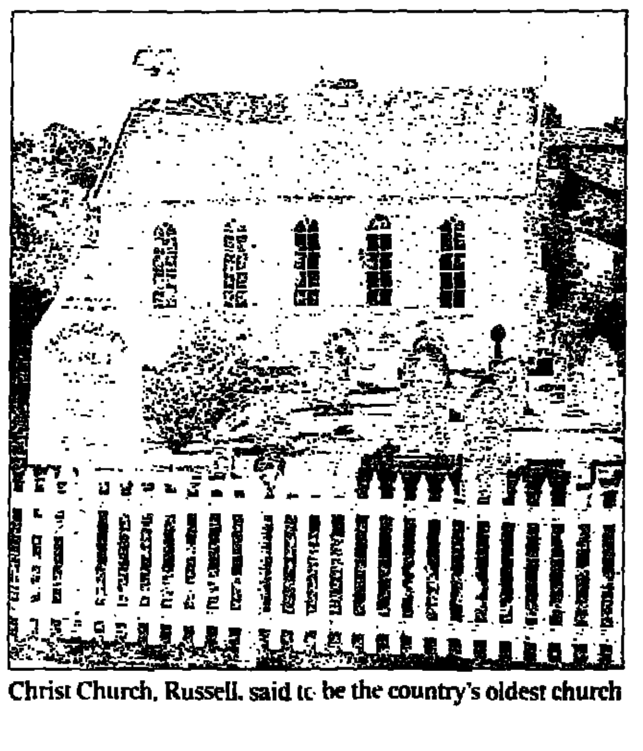
The two *farms could not* have been a more complete contrast. The first was in the far north, a few miles inland from the first capital, Russell, now a quiet seaside resort but once a brawling, bawdy port described as "the hell-hole of the Pacific". Across the water lies Waitangi, where the British and the Maoris signed a famous land treaty, now widely deplored. Waitangi also has a lush and spectacular golf *course.*

Sam Ludbrook was a former captain of the golf club and *fulfilled my expectations* by being an accomplished all-round sportsman and country*man, robust in attitude and* speech. Once, we stood outside, his home, Ludbrook House, *gazing across the cro*quet lawn and the ha-ha to his grazing beef cattle and the *luminous blue of a campers'* tent, pitched by the bank of his creek. Sam was gratified by *the campers because they had* taken the trouble to call at the door and ask his permission. *This was gladly given and he* had advised them on the best spot to choose.

*Many other campers, how*ever, did not ask. On one occasion, driving to golf with his *wife Chris, he came across* four of his bullocks sauntering down the main road, running the gauntlet of cars and trucks. The nearest gate was swinging free and there in his field was a family enjoying a picnic. Sam, not mincing words, explained to them that they had released thousands of dollars worth of his assets on to the public highway, *were eating* their lunch on his property, and would they remove themselves. They left, muttering.

Sam also has trouble *with mushroom-pick*ers. Once, after spying a man gathering up *armfuls of fungi on his land*, he pursued the man's car for two hours. Eventually it drew *up outside a suburban house* in Whangarei. Sam got out of his car and cut two cabbages *from the* garden. *When the* mushroom-picker remonstrated, Sam said: "You've been *helping yourself to my* veggies, now I'm helping myself to yours."

Although Ludbrook House was built only in the Twenties, Ludbrooks have been farming *that land since the pioneer* days of the last century. Many of them lie in the graveyard *outside the white church at Te* Waimate, where Bishop Selwyn briefly had his headquarters. Inside the church, the hatchment of the 58th Foot, the Rutlandshires, commemorates their service and, sometimes, death in the Maori wars of 1845.



Christ Church, Russell, said to be the country's oldest church

So the Ludbrooks are, in every sense, part of the soil, New Zealand born and bred. Not so the Ellises, of Watership Down. Roland and Claire have a *350-acre sheep farm* overlooking Lake Taupo with Mount Ruepohu on the horizon. This supposedly dormant volcano erupted last year affording the Ellises a grand*stand* view of the ensuing pyrotechnics. Pumice and other volcanic residue are part of *the landscape.*

Roland, or "Roly", was the fifth generation of his family to play *rugby football for* Rugby School, and subsequently served as a major in the *15th/19th* Hussars. *After many* years' contract farming in Britain he decided this was a *mug's game and that he must* have his own property. Britain was too expensive, so, in 1992, *he bought a small part of what* had once been the station of Prime Minister Keith Hol*yoake and set about building* a house and establishing his own farm.

In appearance, ruddy, burly and corduroyed, with a plummy voice, he seemed, at first, the ultimate Pom. Yet in his identification with the land he farms he seemed as much of a Kiwi as Sam Ludbrook.

*Outside the house every*thing is still quite raw: the wood of the single storey house still bright, the saplings along the newly gravelled driveway pliant in the breeze. Inside, however, photographs of cavalry officers and racehorses, family silver, exposed timber and a comfortable sofa make one feel that Roly and Claire *must have been in situ* for as long as the Ludbrooks.

The farm is named Watership Down after property *in* Berkshire *owned by* Andrew Lloyd Webber that Roly once looked after. Appropriately, the place is ankle-deep in Hazels and Thumpers, or "bloody rabbits" as Roly said with feeling. The little beasts, he *added*, were *almost* as pestilential as possums. Possums were kept under marginal control by the Government's regular "carrot drops", in which poisoned carrots were dropped from *aircraft in a* Pythonesque attempt to cull them. Roly didn't think either possums or bun*nies in the least bit cuddly.* Like the thistles, which no amount of spraying could el*iminate, they were the enemy.*

After breakfast, we drove in his elderly Japanese truck to the *kennels, picked up his* three working dogs, and toured the property. It could almost have been a hill farm in Wales or Scotland.

Despite the dodgy clutch, we negotiated every steep hillside to the summit, and the views were stupendous. Standing there, Roly pointed to his boundaries and charted the progress of the surrounding farms. One over there one had just been sold for forestry: another was being turned over to dairy. *Before long he was afraid he would be the only* sheep farmer left in the vicinity. He wasn't happy. A whole way of *life. his* way of *life,* seemed to be under threat.

There has been a drift from the land to the city in New Zealand, and yet, despite the magazine article positing the *notion of the "rambunctious* casino", I was unconvinced. In Auckland I stayed in an ele*gant "boutique hotel" run* by Mariette Henning-Wells. It was the epitome of suburban chic, with a Kiwi twist — a pool *overlooked* by kumquat, hibiscus, mandarin, oleander and palm, and a breakfast menu which began with the message, "I would like to greet the day in slow motion."

In Wellington, the B&B was a *modern apartment overlook*ing the harbour. It was owned by the country's leading man*ufacturer of liquorish.*

In both cities there were *modern shopping malls*, cool new restaurants on converted quaysides, *local seafood and Sauvignon* Blanc. I was impressed but not awed. One morning earlier I had woken at dawn and set sail across Lake Tarawera under the gaze of an old volcano and sacred Maori forests to breakfast in Hot Water Bay, where the sand was baking underfoot and *steam rose off the waters.*

Halfway across I plunged a line off the stern of the yacht, *Clearwater Pride*, and a 7lb rainbow trout obligingly sank its jaws into the hook and emerged in time to be baked for lunch with a stuffing of fresh mint and *kiwi fruit.* The *experience made me* feel almost as close to nature as the farmers with whom I had stayed.

Civilised though its cities may be, New Zealand is still, essentially, the land where Tane Mahuta reigns supreme.

TIM HEALD

● *The author was a guest of Silk Cut Travel and Air New Zealand.*

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Weekend break: Sintra is one of Portugal's architectural gems and well worth the short journey from Lisbon

Byron was on the right line

It is of the essence that England's most famous Romantic approved of Sintra. In 1809, after a week of losing his breakfast on the Lisbon packet from Falmouth, Byron landed in Portugal. "I am very happy here, because I loves oranges, and talks bad Latin to the monks, who understand it as it is like their own — and I goes into society (with my pocket-pistols), and I swims in the Tagus all across at once, and I rides on an ass or a mule, and swears Portuguese, and have got a diarrhoea and bites from the mosquitoes. But what of that? Comfort must not be expected by folks that go a pleasuring."

The boy wonder stalked about Lisbon, found it filthy and was directed into the hills. The lush heights of Sintra were in peril of getting a tacky name for themselves as a place of refuge for bored merchants and apostles of decadence, such as William Beckford, but the young poet instantly caught a dose of brochure-writer's hyperbole.

"The village of Sintra about fifteen miles from the capital is perhaps in every respect the most delightful in Europe," he wrote. "It contains beauties of every description natural and artificial, palaces and gardens rising in the midst of rocks, cataracts and precipices, convents on stupendous heights, a distant view of the sea and the Tagus..."

I went to Sintra, in part to test Byron's description, and was surprised to find there is a good deal of truth in it. That he hadn't yet seen anywhere else in Europe is beside the point, his egotism made him an uncannily good judge. Certain places effortlessly embody our dreamscapes. Sintra, for the British, loomed over by crags and fissured by wooded ravines, encrusted with way-out Baroque and Moorish fantasies, is a romantic counterpart to the sobriety of our little island. This is Tangiers with a smell of Kent woods; Sevenoaks with a fever.

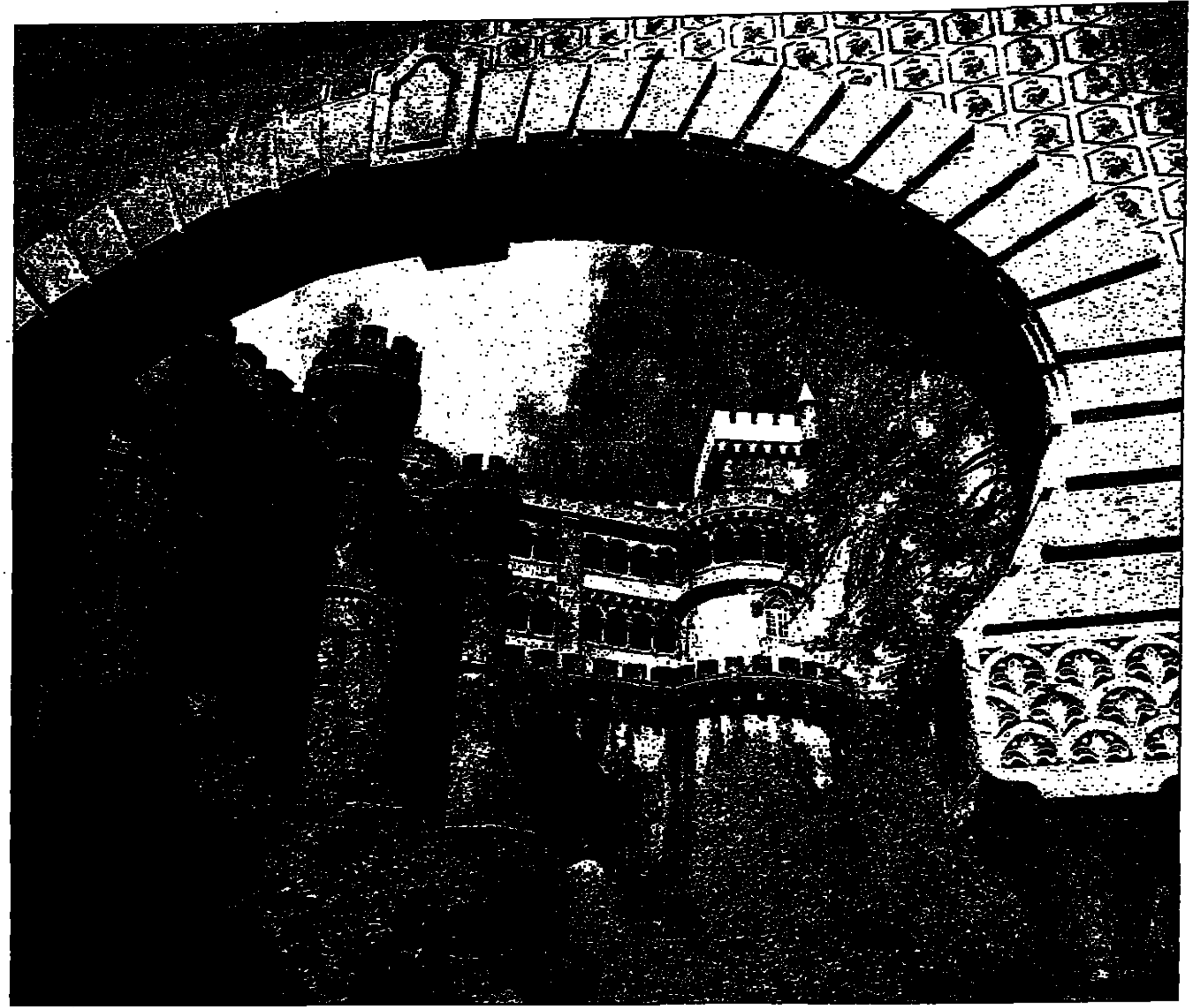
To a British visitor with the remotest vestige of propriety there is a set itinerary to Sintra imposed by its remarkable architecture.

The town can no longer be described as a quiet hill village. Tour buses drizzle through its streets and the best way to enjoy its faintly besieged charms is to take the train from Lisbon and walk or hire a taxi. (You should stay overnight at the Hotel Central, or use the *Turismo* for guidance. A glass of white Burgemester port and the fall of dusk, and the town centre is suddenly blessed by peace.) I arrived in a hire car, a sin that offered the advantage of lazy access to the places that must be seen.

Sintra's architectural curiosities are out of all reasonable proportion to its size, its chief attraction being the bizarre centrepiece of the Palácio da Pena on the hilltop of the pretty Pena park, proof that many Germans were quite mad 150 years ago. Ferdinand de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's summer residence (he was married to Maria II) puts Disneyland's cardboard turrets and ramparts in the shade, and must be one of the greatest follies of Europe after Neuschwanstein.

There are further obligatory sites: on two rocky hills to the north, the original Castelo dos Mouros, from which the 12th-century Moorish commander viewed with dismay the barques of the arriving Crusaders; another palace, the Seteais, a former monastery now a hotel *de luxe* for the corpulent likes of movie executives and Formula 1 teams. As if to make amends for such ostentation, the cork-lined cells of the Convento dos Capuchos, which lies at the end of a snaking birch-lined road, all dourness, muffled walls and penitential quiet.

TCL



Sintra's chief architectural curiosity is the Palácio da Pena, summer residence of Ferdinand de Saxe-Coburg-Gotha

There must have been something in the nature of the Portuguese, a stoicism laced with Catholic tolerance, which has let the extravagance of Sintra's visitors pass. (Possibly it was the damp. The sun shines most days but I noticed the atmosphere robbing me of indignation at the flocks of other tourists, a fact I put down to the soothing humidity of the surrounding woods.)

To a heritage-saturated British visitor it seems incredible that a town which has seen what Sintra has seen should have stayed so unselfconscious and calm.

One result of its memorable calm is that the town itself, not the follies round it, is the best part of a visit. I could turn two corners and there was not a foreigner about. Another two corners and it was a mere ten yards to the Tulhas Bar in Rua Gil Vicente, with its excellent, languidly served *pinchos de gambas* and chips.

These reminders of fundamental southern slowness, and the charming if haphazard domestic architecture of Sintra-Vila, are a more than adequate justification of Byron's uninformed enthusiasm.

However, it is a curious fact that the town's most magnificent building does not feature in most guidebooks. Five minutes' walk from the Tulhas Bar on the road to the coast is a grand and fantastic *quinta* of many towers, the Belvedere.

Subdued by the total war of tour buses and their regiments, the centre of Sintra can't be what it once was, but strolling past the Belvedere after lunch, which I did several times, offers proof that the Sintra of your imagination is still alive.

Even among the competitive façades of Venice's smaller churches I don't think I ever saw a more obsessively decorated execution of a Baroque building than this splendid, damp-streaked masterpiece.

The game may be almost up; but better late than never, pal — as Byron so succinctly put it about a completely different amatory encounter.

JULIAN EVANS

● *The author was a guest of British Airways Holidays.*

FACT FILE

■ How to get there: British Airways Holidays (01293 723100) offers a three-night Lisbon City Break at the three-star Hotel Capitol (about five minutes from Edward VII Park, close to the city centre) from £295 per person (until July 1), including scheduled return flights, bed and breakfast and transfer.

■ Where to stay: Hotel Central, Praça da República 35, 2710 Sintra (00 351 1 923 00 63), double rooms from 9,700 escudos (about £42). Quinta das Sequoias, App 104, 2710 Sintra (00 351 1 924 38 21).

■ For further information on hotels at all prices, and places to visit, call at the Turismo, close by the Praça da República, which is open 9am-8pm Jun-Sept, and 9am-7pm Oct-May. Or phone: 00 351 1 923 39 19.

■ Car hire in Lisbon can be arranged with Hertz through British Airways Holidays and costs about £35 a day for the first five days, £28 thereafter.

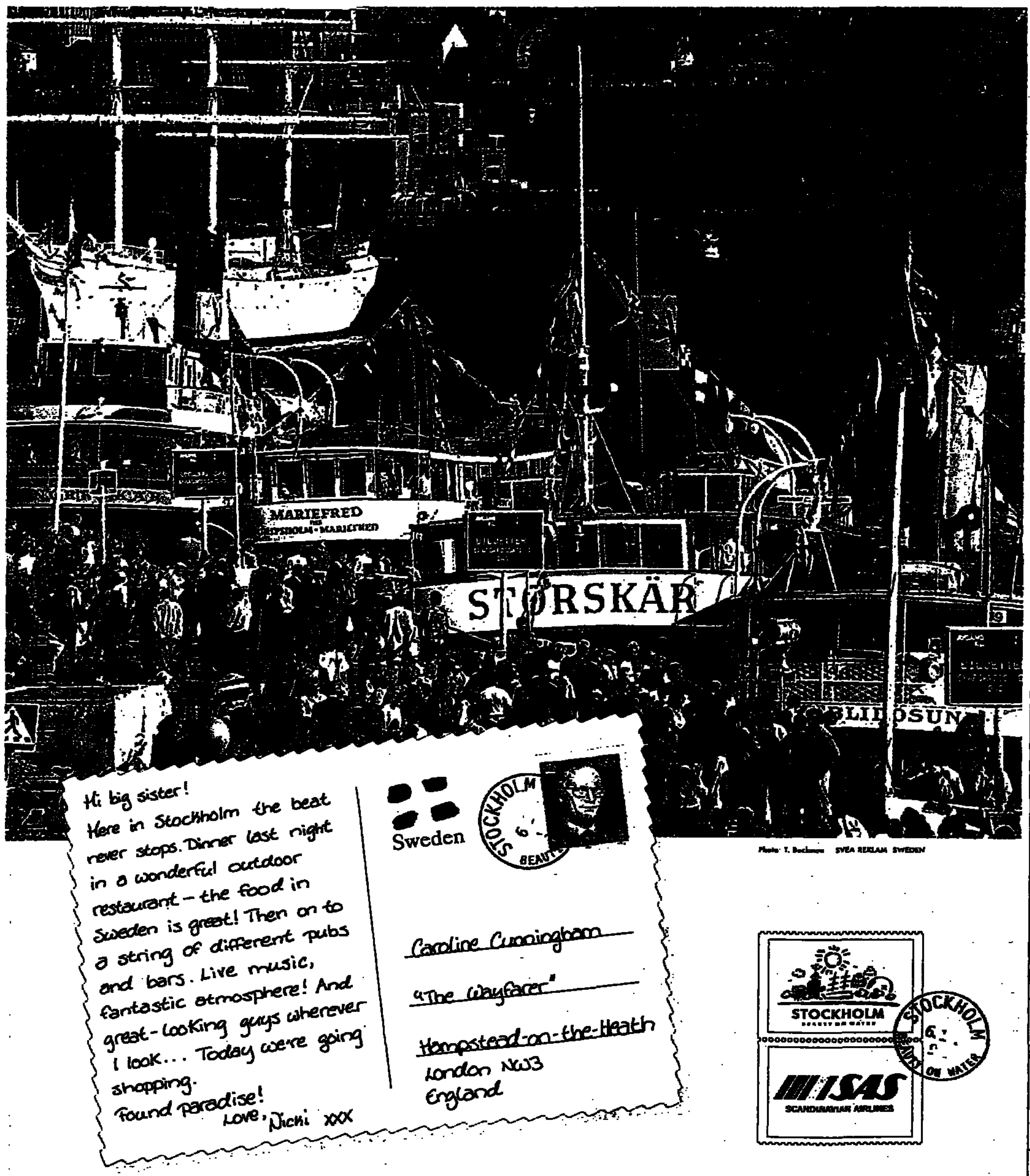
■ The journey from Lisbon to Sintra takes 45 minutes by car. The train leaves from the Rossio station in Lisbon (£1.48 return) and takes about an hour. Sintra's station is 15 minutes' walk from Sintra-Vila centre.

■ In southern Portugal — Lisbon to the Algarve — the weather is hot from May to November (20C upwards) and remarkably mild the rest of the year. In the high season (June-Sept) booking is strongly recommended.

■ To travel with *Portugal: The Rough Guide* (Rough Guides, £9.99) at times seems like going armed with the equivalent of a liquorice pistol (eg, the country market is on the first and third of each month, not the second and last). Nevertheless, it is the most comprehensive, practical and reliable of all those available.

■ Recommended reading: *Portugal*, by David J.J. Evans (Cadogan, £14.99). *Lisbon*, photos and text by Manfred Hamm and Werner Radasewstry (Nicolai, £14.99). *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, by José Saramago (Harvill, £8.99).

Stockholm. If you want to impress your friends.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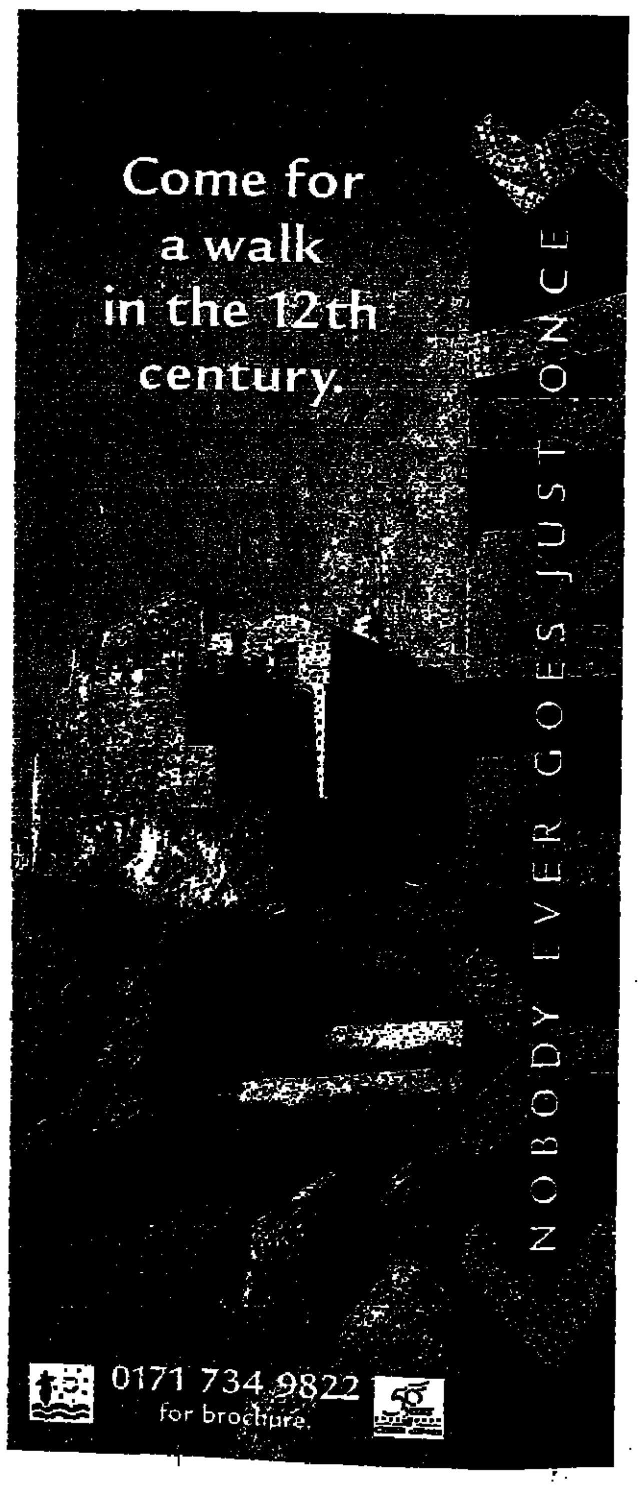
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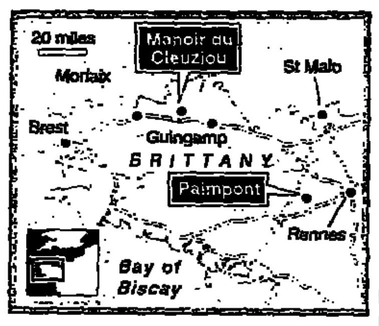
Brittany: Under canvas on a luxurious site, and walking in Arthur's footsteps

BILL HOLT

The 16th-century Manoir du Cleuziou, not far from Belle-Isle-en-Terre in central Brittany, whose splendid grounds contain magnificent camping sites that are ideal for families

Camping for connoisseurs



Remember that depressing smell of damp tent as you unrolled it on arrival at your camping site? The disappearance of those two crucial pegs so that it flapped all night in the wind? The ground with a bump under your hip and a hollow under your head? The wet that came through because the fly sheet had mysteriously disappeared since the last time you camped? And that was just the first night.

Times have changed. Now, when you tell friends you have just returned from camping with the children, and they say "Oh, great", with that half-disguised look of pity, you can keep your secret to yourself.

The tent at our Brittany campsite was already set up for us, a spacious affair with a sitting and kitchen area in front and two sleeping areas to the rear (one with two beds for the children, the other with a double bed for the parents), with a thin area between for hanging up clothes. The tent pegs were all in place. The floor was firm and flat. A proper gas stove with four rings and a grill sat reassuringly next to the fridge, with crockery, cutlery, pots, pans and corkscrew stored in units. There was even an electric light which worked. A dining table could be moved outside and set up with a sun umbrella. This was tough camping.

The Manoir du Cleuziou, not far from Belle-Isle-en-Terre on the road between Guingamp and Morlaix in central Brittany, was our choice. The camping sites in the grounds of the manor house, dating back to the 16th century, are secluded behind hedges and flowers. All the facilities of the manor — swimming pool, tennis court, billiard room, volleyball court, grassy play-area for children, shop — are available to the campers.

The sites belong either to the Manoir or to one of two camping organisations. We were with French Country Camping, which makes a point of having two "mature" couriers to look after their campers. Ours were Bill and Win, a good-humoured couple who were more like parents, always there to help out. Bill could usually be found repairing bicycles (rental was free, with helmets), preparing the ground (one mole was in residence, too) or advising on places to go or which restaurants to visit. The children took to Win instantly. Campers with the other organisations said how much they envied us our two organisers.

This is a holiday for families. Within about 8.6 seconds of pulling in after the drive from the ferry at Caen, five-year-old Laura had rushed up to our daughters and whisked them off to the playground. Her family, we later discovered, had postponed their trip south to stay on longer because they liked Cleuziou so much. Children adore the freedom to rush where they want around the spacious grounds, though you may have to keep them away from the pool. The Manoir is miles out in the country and parents accustomed to constant vigilance suddenly find themselves relaxing. Another pleasure for town-dwellers being so far out in the sticks is the complete absence of light pollution at night. Hale-Boppers at Cleuziou will be in heaven at present.

Cleuziou is well signposted along pretty lanes running past farmland where cows easily outnumber people. This is Brittany off the beaten track, where you have to drive half an hour to reach the pink granite coast. The villages are picturesque, houses yellow-stoned or whitewashed, with immaculate displays of geraniums when we visited in late August.

We were newcomers to the pleasures of Brittany. The Concorde restaurant near the church in Louargat has good food, with menus from about Fr60 to Fr100. The tiny market there provides delicious pâtés, mussels and other produce for a cook-up at the campsite. Live rabbits, ducklings and chickens were a further distraction, but not for the pot. Neighbouring Belle-Isle-en-Terre has an unpretentious charm and is worth a visit, especially when the circus is in town. Camels and llamas were grazing on the green when we wandered past.

But the short drive to the pink granite coast, which stretches from Trégastel in the west to Bréhat in the east, yielded all kinds of pleasures. One of our favourite spots was St Michel-en-Grève, where the beach is vast and there is a gorgeous view from the churchyard with its elaborate and colourful gravestones. For those willing to drive further afield the whole of west Brittany lies ready to explore.

Back at the campsite after a day out you can eat at the snack bar by the pool and there is a crêperie in the cellar of the Manoir, but for a treat one night the restaurant is excellent. Fillet of red mullet with crispy artichoke chips, potato stuffed with crab, rabbit in a caramel sauce … this made a change from the honest fare we had cooked back at the tent. There was also a two-stage main course: *demi-canette rotie*, where a quarter of the duck comes in a sauce made from chouchenn, the local spicy spirit, followed by a crispier quarter with lettuce. The five set menus range from Fr90 to Fr225, where you leave the choice to the chef. Children can have three courses for Fr60.

Camping in this style is a relaxing way to spend a holiday and will not break the bank. We will be back, if the clamouring of small voices is anything to go by.

TIMOTHY RICE

● *The author was a guest of French Country Camping.*

Campers enjoying the swimming pool at Manoir du Cleuziou

FACT FILE

- **French Country Camping, Canute Court, Toft Road, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0NL (01565 626266).**
- **A tent at Manoir du Cleuziou for two adults and up to four children, return ferry crossing and travel pack costs £591 a week in peak summer, £329 in late August. Mobile homes and country chalets also available.**
- **Ferry and Le Shuttle crossings are arranged through the leading operators. Multi-site holidays can also be arranged. There are sites in Italy, Switzerland and Spain as well as all over France. Sites are chosen for their character and tend to be small and secluded.**
- **Reading: *French Entrée — Brittany*, by Patricia Fenn (Quiller, £6.95). *Everyman Brittany* (Everyman, £16.99). *Camping Caravaning: Le guide* (Michelin, £8.50).**

In the Gallic footsteps of King Arthur

The forest of Paimpont is all that remains of the great medieval hunting forest of Broceliande, a setting filled with folklore in the green country west of Rennes. Legend has it that Joseph of Arimathea sheltered in Broceliande after the Crucifixion, taking with him the Holy Grail, the cup Christ drank from at the Last Supper.

The French also believe that King Arthur, Merlin, Sir Lancelot and the rest were Bretons who lived in the forest, and never came to England at all. This may seem unlikely to a true-blue Brit, but to add lustre to this claim the local people have recently enshrined their Arthurian legends in the form of a circular walk in the woods. The three-day trek is a quest in itself, through a countryside crammed with romantically-named places, like Folle Pensée and la Val Sans Retour, Merlin's Tomb, The Golden Tree and the Rock of the Goat; these names alone should make you want to go there.

The walk began, as all walks should, with a very long lunch. This was taken at the Relais de Broceliande, a small logis by the lake at Paimpont. Seafood and crêpes and a bottle or two of local cidre-bouche did not prepare us for the walk or the sight of the hotel parrot drinking beer from a tap on the bar.

Paimpont is pretty, with a medieval abbey and a great lake and plenty of walks in the surrounding woods. Our walk that afternoon was a rather long 13 miles, mostly on forest tracks. It might have been shorter but we got lost and saw not a sign of a knight or a fairy. Eventually we emerged from the woods and found signs to our first night stop, the Manoir de Tertre, a romantic hotel on the outskirts of Paimpont.

Parts the Manoir date back to the Middle Ages, and a recent owner was a leading light of the Breton Druids, but today the hotel attracts lovers who dine by candlelight with fingers entwined and mud-spattered walkers from the surrounding woods who sit about in their socks. There is a dog and a big log fire, a useful bar, a flock of sheep, four-poster beds and a very muddy walk to a spot in the nearby woods where the Druids used to gather.

We squelched down there after breakfast next day and learnt that the essential requirements for Druid gathering are holly, beech and chestnut trees, a rushing stream, mistletoe and a flat rock; lay on that lot and you will soon be waist-deep in Druids. All this was good colourful stuff but our quest was for King Arthur and we pressed on for the Fontaine de Barenton and another dose of Arthurian legend.

The Fontaine lies deep in the woods and, because we were once again lost, we got there in the end by following a group of French schoolchildren out for a cultural ramble. The story of Barenton concerns Merlin, King Arthur's personal wizard, who fell in love with the fairy Vivaine who lived hereabouts. For reasons yet unknown she shut him in a stone by the Fontaine de Barenton where he still lurks and works his magic.

Local legend has it that if you pour water on Merlin's Stone at the Fontaine it will start to rain. Since it rains every five minutes in Brittany at the best of times this seemed a fair bet, but the snag is to find the right stone.

In the end we poured water on every stone around the Fontaine and, sure enough, it started to rain. Within five minutes it was coming down like stair-rods.

It was still raining when we checked into the Auberge de la Table Rond at Neant sur Yvel that evening and, when we went down to dinner, water was pouring across the floor of the bar from a leak in an upstairs bathroom. Pouring water on Merlin's Stone should only be done with care.

The final leg of the walk, 19 miles back to the car at Paimpont, is, frankly, something of a slog. On the other hand the scenery is superb and this day offered the finest walking of the trip, up the Valley of No Return to the castle of Lancelot du Lac at Trecesson beside rushing streams, along ridges above valleys cloaked with gorse. We managed to get lost yet again above the Val Sans Retour but were rescued by the same schoolchildren we had met the day before: they are now convinced that Folle Pensée was founded by the English.

This three-day trek through the woods of Broceliande is a good introduction to the pleasures of walking in France. The daily stages are rather long, at 13, 16 and 19 miles, but the countryside is gentle and there are villages on every side equipped with bars and a few Arthurian legends. The hotels are comfortable and the food was excellent but, best of all, this is a walk with a theme.

Merlin may or may not be locked in a rock but these Dark Age tales hang over the woods of Broceliande and make this walking holiday that little bit special. Just go easy with the water around the stones of Barenton.

ROBIN NEILLANDS

Fontaine de Barenton, where Merlin is said to be captive

FACT FILE

- **Brittany Ferries (0990 360360) offers a five-day excursion fare to St Malo from £152.**
- **The closest port to Paimpont is St Malo, which is served by Brittany Ferries from Portsmouth. Full details from any ABTA travel agent or from Brittany Ferries on the number above.**
- **Walking holidays in Brittany can also be arranged through Inntravel of Hovingham, Yorkshire (01653 628811).**
- **Walkers in Brittany will need boots or stout trainers, a rainproof anorak and a small daypack. The *Michelin Green Guide to Brittany*, in English, explains the history and legends of Broceliande.**

WORD WATCHING

Answers from page 25

VERATRUM
(c) A perennial genus of the family *Veratreae* of liliaceous plants; a plant belonging to this genus, especially the white hellebore (*Veratrum album*); also a rhizome of this. From the Latin *vērātrum* hellebore. "Veratrum has likewise been found useful in epilepsy, and other convulsive complaints."

WITTICASTER
(a) and (b) A petty or inferior wit, a witling. Thus, any broadcaster or television "host". By analogy with poetaster. *Latham's Dictionary* of 1782 cites Milton: "The mention of a nobleman seems quite sufficient to arouse the spleen of one witticaster."

VASQUINE
(c) Petticoat. From the obsolete French *basquine*. Walter Scott, 1820: "I shall endure her presence without any desire to damage either her curch or *vasquine*." Her *what*, Sir Walter? Her curch is her kerchief or headsquare.

WHINNOCK
(c) The smallest pig in a litter, the runt. Perhaps from the root of *whine*. "A Cadma, the least of the Pigs which a Sow hath at one fare; it is also called the Whinnock."

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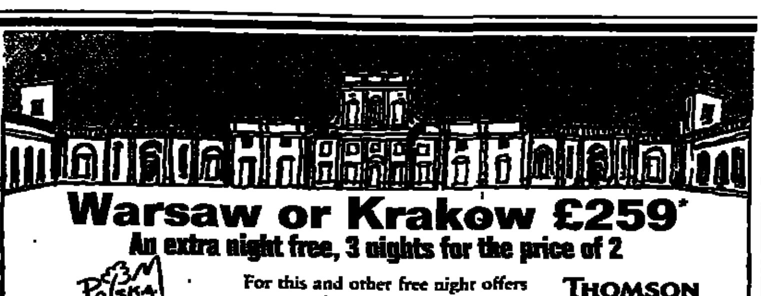

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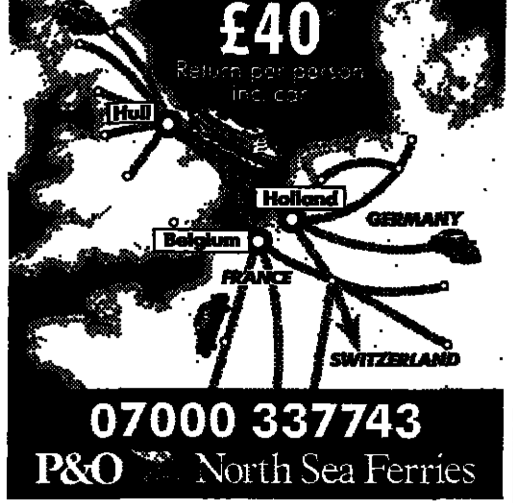

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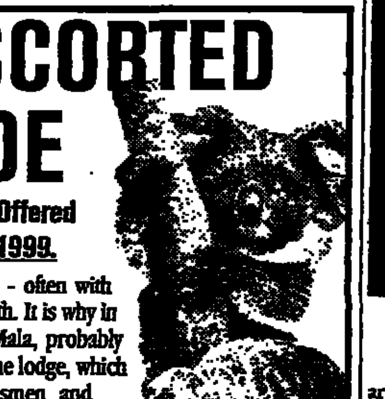

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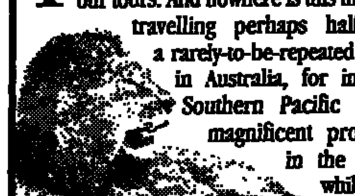

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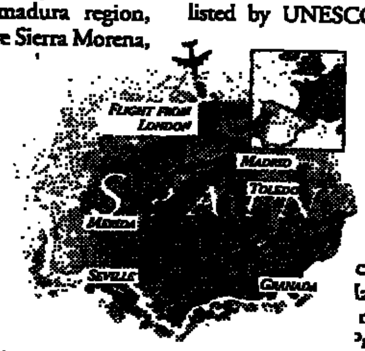

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DAY 4 - TUESDAY

You now travel east and onwards to Granada, fabulous city of a turbulent past. Once the thriving capital of the Moorish kingdom, its spirit is captured in the graceful arches and cool cloisters of The Alhambra. Here you will stay for 2 nights in the 3 star Hotel Guadalupe.

DAY 5 - WEDNESDAY

Today you'll enjoy a guided tour of Granada, a city of fantastic sights and places of interest.

Take a peaceful stroll through The Alhambra. Then go on to the 14th century Alcázar, richly decorated by the affluent Moors. Meander through the Court of the Myrtle Trees and Hall of the Ambassadors. In the Palace of the Emperor Charles V soak up the beauty and then wander through the vibrant Generalife Gardens. For lunch, why not sample the local tapas?

DAY 6 - THURSDAY

Today you leave Granada and head north over the Rio Guadalquivir to the historic region of New Castile.

The route skirts Valdepenas, renowned for its wine-making, and ends in Toledo, listed by UNESCO as part of mankind's cultural heritage.

Perched high on a rocky crag, Toledo is an interesting marriage of architectural styles. Gothic sits side by side with buildings by the Moors.

After a tour of the city you move on to ladrid where you stay for nights in the 3 star Praga.

DAY 7 - FRIDAY

A fitting finale to your tour of classical Spain is a day spent in Madrid.

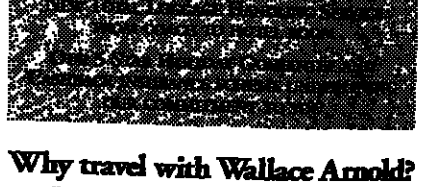
Europe's highest city, it stands in the centre of a vast plain relieved at the northern horizon by the purple peaks of the Sierra de Guadarrama.

The city is a fascinating maze of narrow streets, alleyways and beautiful, flower-filled jardinillos.

Included in the price of your holiday is a half day sightseeing tour. You'll visit the Palacio Real, the Plaza Mayor and many more places of historic interest.

DAY 8 - SATURDAY

Today you fly back to Heathrow with a week of wonderful memories.



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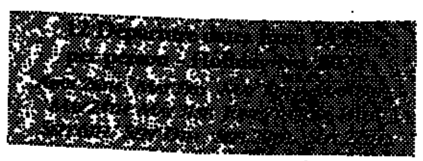

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هكذا من الأصل

Norfolk: The empty north coast full of pleasures; the medieval county town full of churches and pubs

ALBAN DONOHOE

The windmill *is the giveaway that you* are in Norfolk, and between Cley next the Sea (above) and Burnham Market you will find almost every pleasure, from walking the wild and stunning coastline to eating, from golf to riding to watersports

Where to live off the flat of the land

It is said that the art of taking a break lies *in not breaking* your neck when you take one. The surest way of returning from a break in a state of nervous collapse is to go without a plan, trusting only to serendipity, which, in my experience, inclines more to dips than *serenity*.

There is nowhere within a three-hour drive of London or the East *Midlands* that is at once so empty and yet so full as the north Norfolk coast, between Burnham Market and Cley next the Sea. Empty (comparatively) of traffic and people, full of almost every possible pleasure, from walking the wild and *stunning coastline to eating*; from golf to riding to sailing, from windsurfing to sightseeing. Even the most hyperactive child can be reduced by the *sportier pursuits* to a little pile of exhaustion.

Burnham Market, within almost *a longbow-shot of the salt marshes* and the sea beyond, is as good a place to start as any, a *Go-Between* village with a single road bisecting the wide village green. On either side of it the Georgian façades are unchanged, although many of *them now conceal fine restaurants*, food shops, galleries, bookshops, and Mike Gurney's legendary fishmongery, with Miv Watt's stylish Fish Cafe above — a perfect place to lunch on oysters or *bouillabaisse*, or perfect plaice.

Seafood is king at Wells-Next-The-Sea

Bearing *in mind* that your first imperative will be to find a bed for the night, and a good dinner. The *Hoste* Arms, on the green, offers you the choice of a spacious four-poster or cozy chintz bedrooms (all *en suite*, and all supplied with walking maps). It has five attractive eating areas and almost as many ethnic cuisines, including traditional English which you can enjoy unpasta'ed and unpolented.

On Sunday mornings, and at night, the bar is a "local", not only *for the occasional Royal and their* guests from nearby Sandringham, but for more beautiful faces per square foot than anywhere else in Norfolk. If, on the other hand, you would prefer the quiet of a rural farmhouse, and a B&B that far *transcends those modest initials*, then at North Creake, just slightly inland from Burnham Market, you will find the gentle and civilised Jeremy Brettingham-Smith and his wife Mary McCarthy (daughter of the Old Bloomsburyite Desmond *MacCarthy) and herself one of the* leading stencillers in the country. Delights of their farmhouse include either an enchantingly decorated double room *en suite*, or an almost equally enchanting attic bedroom, just as sweet, but not quite so *en* — *the* bathroom is two paces down the corridor. Breakfast (as late and as leisurely as you like) is a serious, *home-made* event, served with as much solitude or conversation as you like. I'd plump for the conversation if I were you; by the time she *sweeps you out with the crumbs*, Mary will have arranged for you to rent a sailing dinghy, a horse, a bicycle or a sand yacht, or booked you on a boat trip to see the seals at Scolt Head, while drawing you a frameworthy map of how to get to the endless beach at Holkham or to the wild bird sanctuary between Blakeney and Cley next the Sea.

If lazing among little shops better suits the tenor of your break, then the little town of Holt is a Domingo aria for the acquisitive (though very *quiet on Sundays*). *This narrow-laned* Georgian spidertown in the web of north Norfolk offers everything from stylish *clothes* (The Warehouse) to three floors of secondhand and antiquarian books (Tristram Hull).

Did I hear "Lunch"? The choices are as endless as the pubs that spring out in the nick of time from the sides of tiny roads or village greens, and such *prandial* pleasures could be followed by an afternoon's wandering among the *endless ancient churches along the* coast (Binham Priory, Cley and Blakeney churches are particularly *memorable), or among the grounds* and garden centre of Holkham Hall, seat of the Earl of Leicester.

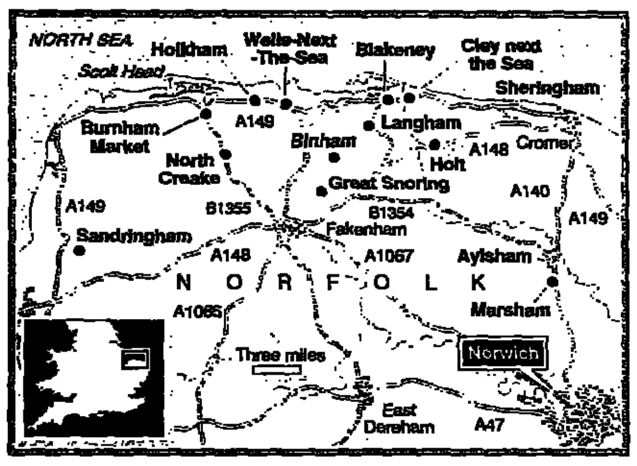
At night, when your tastebuds flower, you can treat them to the finest food at Yetman's of Holt, or at Bernard and Carla Phillips, The *Moorings* at Wells-Next-The-Sea, or let them blossom among unhurried curries at the Taste of India, *also in Holt, before slipping quietly* through Great Snoring on your way back to bed.

Let no one tell you that Norfolk is flat. It rises from climax to climax while keeping in perfect tune with you, whatever your mood and however *sharp your mind* may be. You prefer hills and dales? The skies at sunset are as beautiful and *mountainous and as snow-capped* as the Alps, and are guaranteed to break nothing more substantial than your heart.

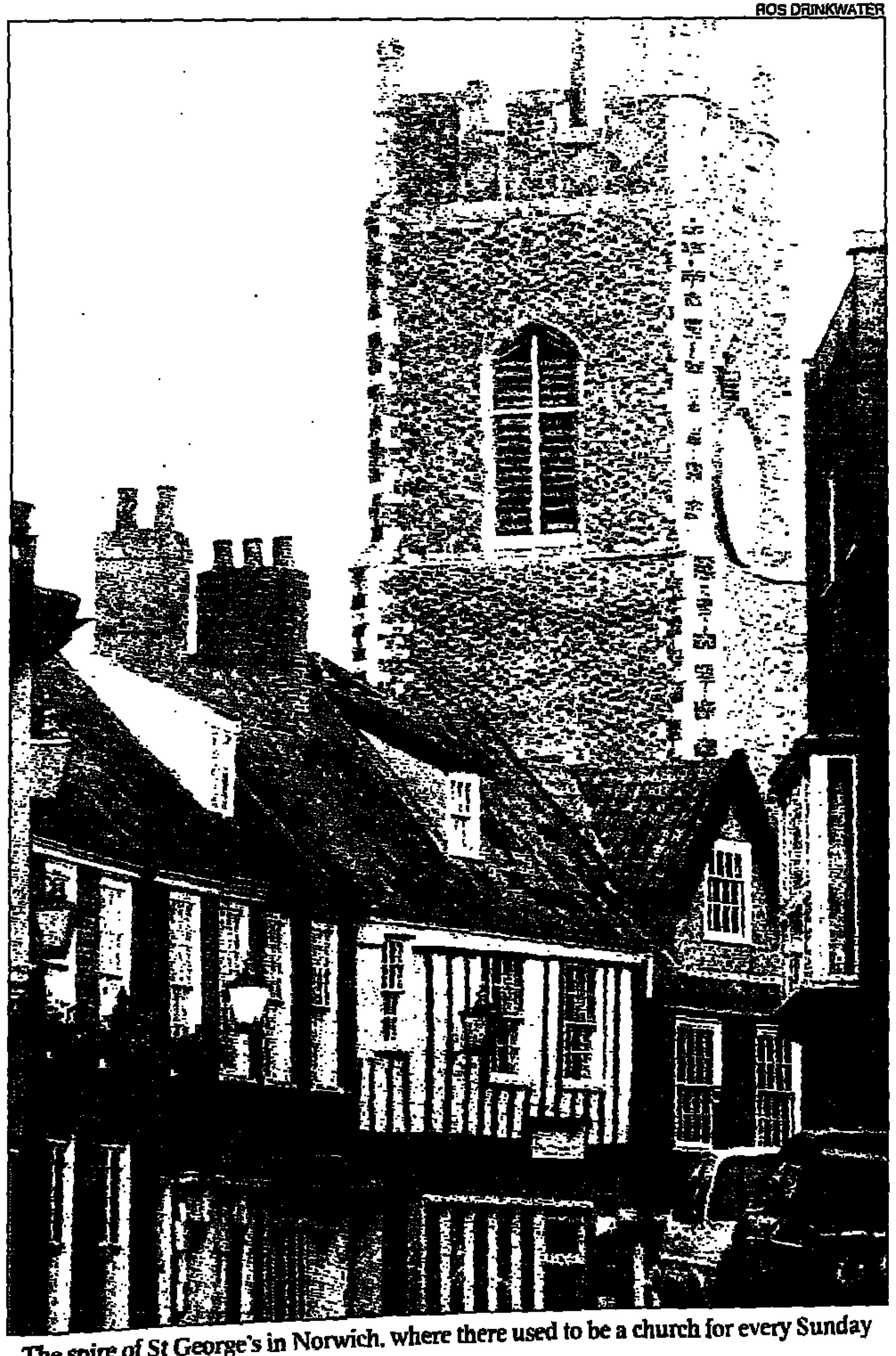
SIMON GOUGH

NORTH NORFOLK COAST FACT FILE

- **The Hoste Arms, Burnham Market, Norfolk PE31 8LD (01328 738 777, fax 01328 730 105): three-course dinner about £20 a head, excluding wine. Weekend break (two nights) £76-£84 per person, with breakfast. Single room *with shower, £110. Low-season midweek breaks available.***
- **Bed and breakfast at the Brettingham-Smiths, Glebe Farmhouse, Wells Road, North Creake, Fakenham NR21 9LD (01328 730133, fax 01328 730 444: en suite double room £40 a night, attic double £32 a night. Also *recommended: The Old Rectory, West Beckham, Nr Holt NR25 6NZ (01263* 824394) £20 per head. Fine supper £15.**
- **Gurney's Fish Cafe, Market Place, Burnham Market (01328 738967): bring your own wine, no corkage charge, £10-£15. Yetman's Restaurant, Norwich Road, Holt (01263 713320): av £30-35 per *head incl wine, closed Tues. The* Moorings (Bernard & Carla Phillips), Freeman Street, Wells-Next-The-Sea (01328 710 949): av £30 incl wine. Ring for opening times.**



ROS DRINKWATER



The spire of *St George's* in Norwich, where there used to be a church for every Sunday

Hi-tech wizardry takes a pew

Once upon a time, Norwich *could boast* a church for every Sunday and a pub for every day. *This was reason enough for* the annual fortnight messing about on boats on the Norfolk Broads to be tempered with a few days ashore to explore the most complete medieval city in England.

The city *skyline is peppered* with spires; but although the pubs are as full as ever, the same *cannot be said of the* churches. That is to say, they are not full with the faithful *petitioning the Lord with prayer*. Many of the buildings are now redundant but some have found other uses.

One of the *most imaginative* is at the former St Michael Coslany, a church whose fine inlaid flint, typical of the region, has been compared to the ivorywork of old cabinets. The building has been given over to Inspire, part of the Science Project Federation, an *educational* charity, which has transformed it into a hands-on science centre. Where once *were pews there* is *now* all manner of high-tech wizardry guaranteed to occupy the most *curious of young minds*.

Norwich is easily negotiable on foot and this is the best way *to discover its architectural* gems, hidden down winding, cobblestoned alleys. The jewel in the city's *ecclesiastical* crown is the cathedral, a place of immense beauty and serenity. It is made of pale Caen *stone from* Normandy, and is a soaring testament to Norman building skills.

Inside are many treasures. Its chapels are rich with ornaments and paintings; and a reliquary arch (in which, until the Reformation, relics of the saints were kept) now houses a glittering array of silver chalices and communion plate on loan from the diocese's churches.

One of the cathedral's more intriguing artefacts is the Saxon bishop's throne behind the high altar. A recess directly underneath probably once contained relics whose essence, *it was believed, could* rise up through the "flue" and give the bishop seated above some divine assistance. Until the Reformation the cathedral was the home of Benedictine monks. The monks' door leads directly from the cathedral *into expansive cloisters. In the* dappled sunshine, these are a haven of tranquillity in a bustling city.

When it came to building, the Normans thought big. Norwich Castle, an impressive stone keep built as a Norman garrison, is now the largest and finest of the many local *museums*. It houses the Colman Collection of works by the Norwich School of artists, the *world's largest collection of* British ceramic teapots, and a fascinating geology gallery with a complete ichthyosaur and a limestone slab with a dinosaur's *footprint*.

Strongly recommended is the guided tour of the battlements, for glorious aerial views *of the city (not for the* vertigo sufferer; but, if you do go, take binoculars), and the dungeons, which have the full panoply: whipping posts, thumbscrews and a ducking chair (popular with the children in the party).

There is also a gruesome display of the death masks, tufts of hair and all, of those who swung from *the gallows on nearby* Castle Green; and only nervous laughter met the guide's disclosure that what were once the condemned cells are now the women's lavatories.

The entrance ticket to the castle includes admission to the adjacent Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, which is reached through the former prisoners' tunnel, now a realistic reconstruction of a First *World War communications* trench.

Norwich is no great distance from the coast, and the county's northern shores have several pleasant Victorian seaside towns. So we drove north in the morning sunshine through *what is known* as "the Garden of Norfolk". It was here that the last man was hanged in *England for sheep-stealing*.

Our destination was Langham and its glassmaking factory, although the complex of 18th-century red-roofed flint barns give it more of a cottage industry feel. Here was something quite different: to look down from a viewing gallery as the master glassmaker, *who provided a running* commentary, blew, teased and fashioned glistening crystal *creations of exquisite beauty* from molten globules.

After lunch in the rustic, beamed *restaurant — and an* energetic spell (for the children, that is) in the adventure playground in the walled gardens surrounding the complex — we *took the coast road east* to Sheringham. The town is home to the North Norfolk *Steam* Railway, a *full-size* affair which meanders to Holt through countryside designated *an Area of Outstanding* Natural Beauty.

On our return to Sheringham we allowed ourselves a bracing walk along the seashore clifftops, until the lengthening shadows of the *setting sun sent us back to* Norwich and the creature comforts of our hotel. There *we had time for* a leisurely dip in the pool before dinner.

PATRICK O'HANLON

FACT FILE

- **The *author* was a guest of the Hotel Norwich (01603 787260). Dinner, B&B from £32.50 per person.**
- **Norwich Area Tourism Agency (01603 763062) has a free holiday guide containing *details of discounted* courtesy breaks.**
- **Other places to visit: the Sainsbury Centre for *Visual Arts, University* of East Anglia, has sculptures and *paintings* from around the world. The building, *designed by Sir Norman* Foster, has won several awards. Open Tuesday-Sunday (01603 592467). Norfolk Rural Life Museum & Union Farm, Gressenhall. Award-winning museum with working farm. (01362 860563). Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens, Filby, Great Yarmouth, has rare *animals from Asia in* landscaped grounds; willow pattern garden and crocodiles in the swamp house (01493 369477).**
- **The Norfolk and Norwich Festival takes place in October.**

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To win a set of books, answer the following question: Which old county became Britain's newest this week?
Send your answer on a postcard marked "ETB" to PO Box 4AP London W1A 4AP.
- MOOR RAMBLING: the walking specialist Moorland Rover (01598 760523) offers six-day walking breaks on Dartmoor and Exmoor from April 28 to May 2 for £349. The trip, taking in Tarka country and the north *Devon* coast, and covering ten miles a day, is led by guides from the Devon Wildlife Trust. Half-board accommodation is included *in the price*.
- SUNDAY TEE: the four-star Five Lakes Hotel, Golf and Country Club (01621 868888), near Maldon, Essex, offers golfers a Sunday *Driver* break for £85, including two 18-hole rounds on Sunday and Monday morning, Sunday night dinner, and accommodation, breakfast and use of the *hotel's other leisure* facilities. The offer, based on two people *sharing a double/twin room, is available* until December 22.
- *LUXURY PADDLE: Heritage Touring* (01305 266440) offers a weekend break in the four-star Thornbury Castle hotel near *Bristol on May 3 for £329, including a trip* down the Bristol Channel aboard the *Waverley*, a restored paddle steamer. The *Waverley will join a flotilla accompanying* the *Matthew*, a replica of the ship skippered by John Cabot which is repeating his voyage *of 500 years ago to discover Newfoundland*. The price includes two nights' hotel accommodation with dinner, breakfast, and buffet *on the Waverley*.

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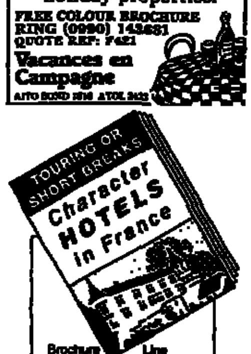

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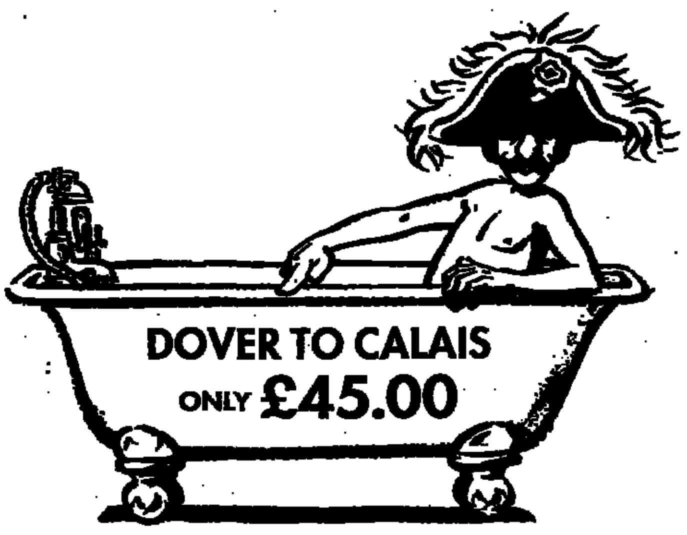

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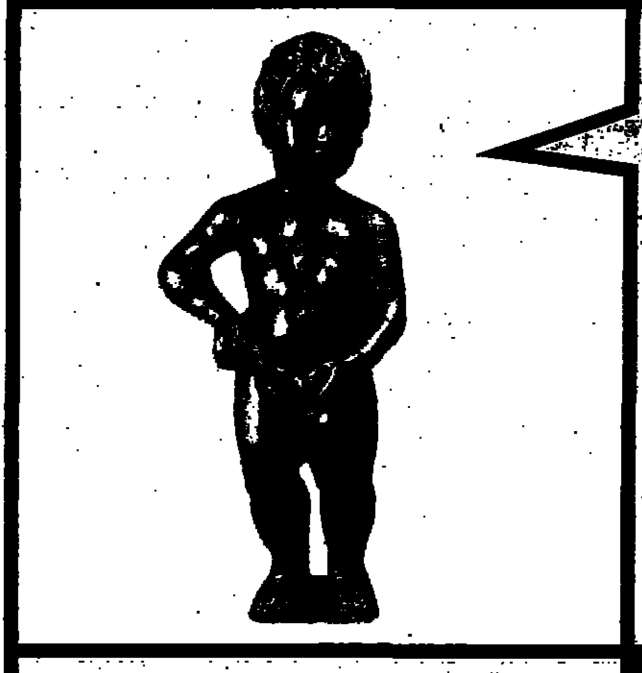

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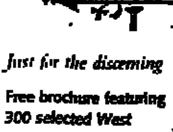

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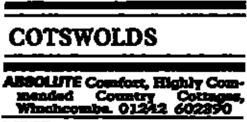

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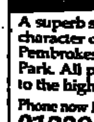

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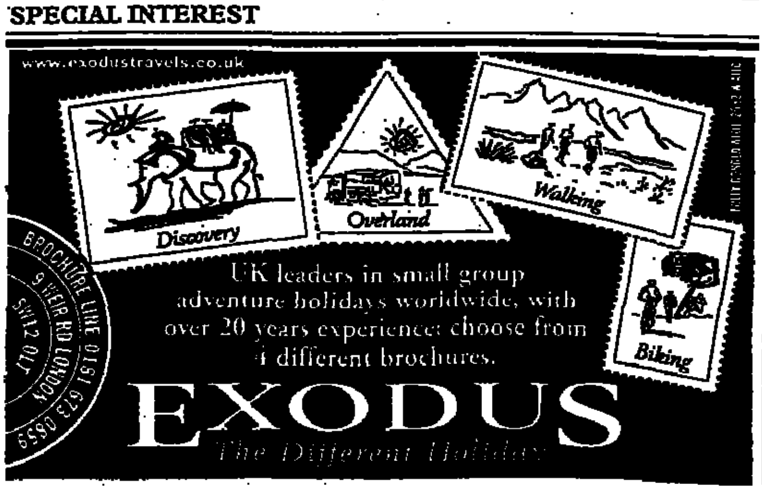

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CHESS

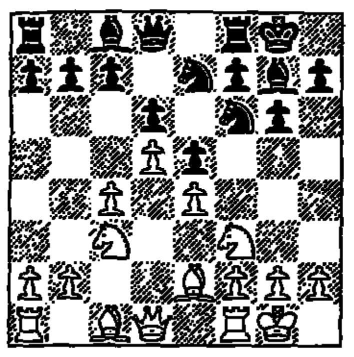
by Raymond Keene

I OFTEN hear the complaint that chess is rendered unnecessarily difficult by the proliferation of modern opening theory. If you do not know the theory of the openings and face a player who is well-prepared you may find yourself playing the middlegame with one hand tied behind your back.

Bobby Fischer's innovation, Fischerandom, was designed specifically to combat this problem. In Fischerandom the starting order of the pieces is shuffled randomly, with both sides adhering to the piece array which is thus selected. At a stroke, opening theory is abolished. However, a drawback is that several pieces may end up on quite inappropriate squares.

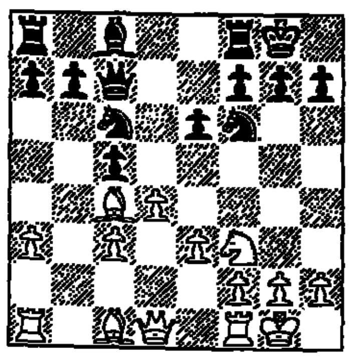
An interesting alternative has been suggested to me, namely that enthusiasts might play from specific opening positions in which development. There is a precedent for this. Arabic players of a thousand years ago established "Tabiyas", or fixed opening positions, which they quickly set up on the board with little thought as to move order or subtleties of sequence. This week, therefore, I intend to propose three modern Tabiyas in which you can try your hand with either colour.

Tabiya 1
King's Indian Defence
White to move



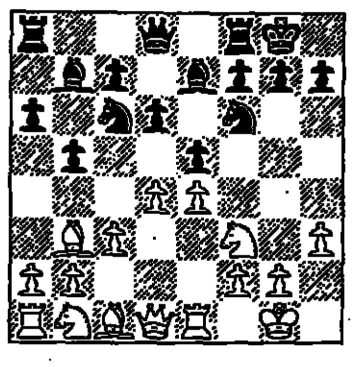
This follows 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7. White's plan is to attack on the queenside, with moves such as b4 and c5 and quite often Ne1-d3. Black will counter on the king's flank, moving the king's knight either to h5, e8 or d7. This frees the black kingside pawn army for a general mobilisation, based on . . . f5, . . . f4, . . . g5 and . . . g4.

Tabiya 2
Nimzo-Indian Defence
White to move



This is reached by 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 c5 6 Nf3 d5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 a3 Bxc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qc7. White's plan is drop his c4-bishop back to a2 or d3 and then advance in the centre with moves such as e4 and d5. Black's various counter-measures include an instant central counter-punch starting . . . e5 or the fianchetto (flank) development of his remaining bishop with . . . b6 followed by . . . Bb7.

Tabiya 3, Ruy Lopez
Black to move



This is reached by 1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 *Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 0-0 Be7* 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 Bb7 10 d4. Black will consider moves such as . . . h6, . . . Re8 and . . . Bf8 to shore up the centre and the kingside. White has several aggressive ideas: a counter at Black's queenside based on a4, perhaps, or closing the centre and chasing off Black's queen's knight with d5.

I would be pleased to hear of readers' experiences from these pattern positions.

WINNING MOVE

By Raymond Keene

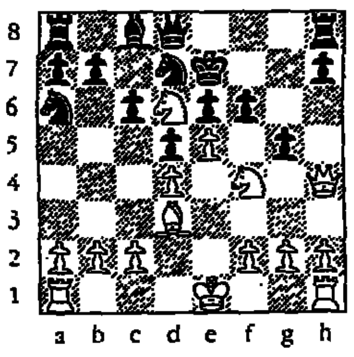
White to play. This position is from the game Speyer - Couvee, Holland 1902.

The black king has already been forced to move, and now his pawn cover has become loosened. How did White now make him swiftly regret these deficiencies?

Send your answer on a postcard to *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The first correct answer drawn on Thursday will win a year's subscription to the Staunton Society, which includes a free invitation to the annual dinner at Simpson's-in-the-Strand. The answer will be published next Saturday.

Last week's solution: 1 Qg8+

Last week's winner: E M Nowell, Guildford, Surrey.



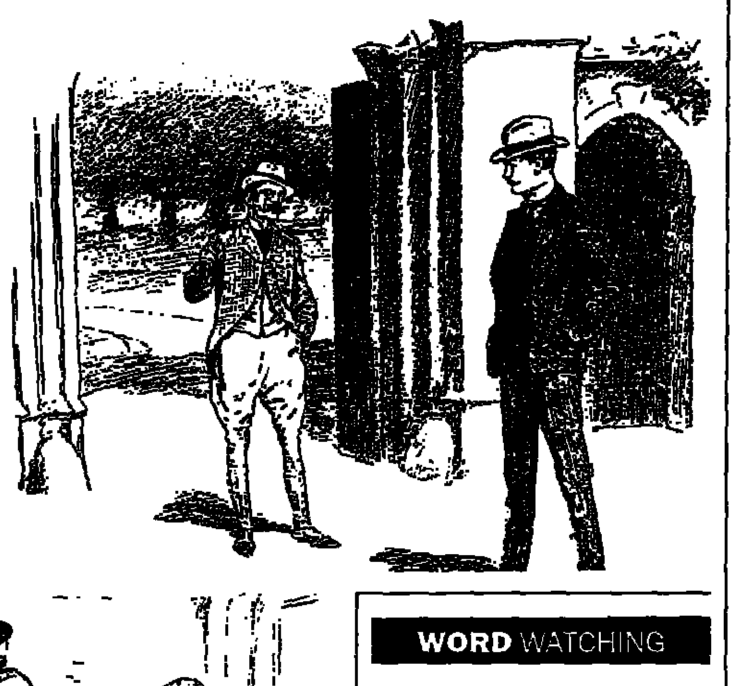
PUNCHLINE

READERS are invited to write an amusing caption for the cartoon (right), from *The Strand Magazine* (reproduced from Westminster Libraries, Sherlock Holmes Collection, Marylebone Library).

The cartoon will be printed again next week with a caption *from those submitted*.

Send caption suggestions on a postcard with your name and address to: Strand Caption 46, Weekend, *The Times*, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

The Editor's decision is final. The closing date for entries is Wednesday, April 9.



"The master says you can only stay one night Mr Merchant, then you must move on"

The winning caption for last week's cartoon (above) was *submitted by A. Smith of Higher Tranmere, Birkenhead*

WORD WATCHING

By Philip Howard

VERATRUM
a. The tip of a ploughshare
b. A true cave
c. A sort of lily

WITTICASTER
a. *A witty broadcaster*
b. A feeble wit
c. A perennial purple shrub

VASQUINE
a. A heifer
b. *A little jug*
c. A petticoat

WHINNOCK
a. Gorse
b. A dropscone
c. A runt

Answers on page 21

BRIDGE

by Robert Sheehan

FROM time to time I am *asked* which is better, the weak 1NT or the *strong* 1NT opening. "Nature, red in tooth and claw" will usually ensure the most efficient method survives and becomes dominant when different methods are in competition. For example, Culbertson's original 1930s system, with its high standards for an opening bid, is now extinct. Similarly, the Strong Two opening bid has all but disappeared, replaced by the Acol Two and the Weak Two. In its turn the Acol Two is something of an endangered species in the tournament world, as players switch to the Weak Two.

Nothing of this sort has happened with the weak and strong No trump openings: they have coexisted for 50 years. Hence the test of competition doesn't seem to have *detected any marked overall difference* in performance between the *methods. It seems likely that their* advantages and disadvantages bal*ance out.*

So what are the main pros and cons? I will consider 12-14 as the range for the weak No-trump, and 15-17 for the strong No-trump.

The case for the strong No-trump.

1. The most important gain is that many 15-17 point hands are awkward for the weak No-trump, e.g.

♠Q432♥J863♦AK4♣AQ.

Playing a weak No-trump your *choice is to open One Heart* — unsatisfactory, as you are bidding a *poor suit with a good hand — or* One Diamond on a three-card suit, *also not ideal. Take away the king* of diamonds and the strong No-*trumpers open One Heart* — not a problem on a weak hand.

Even if you have a four-card minor and a four-card major, you can have difficulties with the weak No-trump. Say the opener has hearts and clubs and 16 points, and the sequence starts 1C-1H. How high should opener raise?

2. The strong No-trump gives away *fewer penalties.*

3. It gains on 15-17 point hands where weak No-trumpers have to start 1X — 1NT:

(i) Marginal games (e.g. 17 opposite 8 or 9) will always be played by the big hand, a definite advantage. There is no compensating gain for the weak No-trumpers: when the points are distributed say 13 opposite 12, it doesn't matter who the declarer is.

(ii) Weak No-trumpers will not reach game with 16 opposite 9: after 1X-1NT, the opener will pass.

The case for the weak No-trump:

1. The least informative, and hence best, sequence to 3NT is 1NT-3NT. That leaves the defence in the dark *as to what to lead. It occurs more* often with a weak No-trump — a 12-*14 point hand is dealt about twice* as often as one with 15-17 points.

2. 1NT has a good preemptive effect — it is often difficult for the opposition to get together if their strength is evenly split. In practice disastrous penalties don't seem to occur very often.

3. When a weak No-trumper opens *one of a suit, his partner knows he* has shape or extra strength.

These latter points persuade me to play a weak No-trump throughout *at duplicate. However, at* rubber bridge, I find losing even an occasional *1,100* penalty too dispiriting, so I prefer weak not vulnerable and strong vulnerable.

COMPUTER GAMES AND PASTIMES

by Tim Wapshott

IN **Micro Machines V3**, Codemasters has once again reinvented the wheel to deliver a timeless classic. Racing along three-dimensional courses now gives the gaming magnificent depth equalled only by its beautiful designs and witty, atmospheric sound effects.

Codemasters released its 8-bit **Micro Machines** on an unsuspecting world in 1990. The tiny racing machines had to dodge unlikely obstacles in the everyday settings of the courses — like breakfast tables, cluttered workshop surfaces, science labs and school desks. What soon placed the title head and shoulders above other racing games was *an unheard-of ability to* accommodate up to eight players *on a single console.*

For the next five years Codemasters stayed with 8-bit then 16-bit formats for a clutch of quality sequels, including **Micro Machines 2**, **Micro Machines 96** and, just before Christmas, **Micro Machines Military**. If there are any regrets for the V3 it is that it marks the end of the era for the lesser consoles, since Micro Machines V3 has been completely reworked to make the most of Sony PlayStation's 32-bit capabilities.

The results are stupefying. The flat, overhead racing action has been replaced by swooping and zooming camera coverage adding great impetus. Vehicles don't just fall off surfaces, they plunge into Axminster carpet ravines. In the restaurant setting, the cars dodge wine bottles and cutlery to the sounds of unseen mumbling diners and the tinkerings of the lounge pianist turning out a continuous melody of elevator tunes.

Most of the settings are effectively miniature works of art. The mesmerising garden courses, for instance, show off *glassy ponds reflecting sunny* skies and banks inhabited by *jumping frogs and buzzing* dragonflies.

Here the action is set to a sublime garden cacophony of *birdsong and noisy but realistic* frog ribbets. V3 serves up 30 vehicles to race, with campervans among those added to the more familiar line-up of power boats, hovercraft, sports cars, tanks, trucks and so on.

Hidden weaponry lurking along the courses, appearing as small green parcels, includes power-ups, force-fields, fireballs and the new *scorpion-like grabber* claws, to snatch the vehicle ahead and hurl it further back in the line-up. I could do without some of the gimmicks. There are fewer player characters to chose from (Jethro, Dwayne, Spider, Cherry et al) but those remaining are fully rounded, puffed-up figures who trade insults before the start of a race — except Spider, who had laryngitis in my version. His lips moved but nothing came out.

Micro Machines V3 allows up to eight *players to compete against one another*

However, the title does boast Codemasters' superlative, almost trademark, multiplayer options. Up to four can race on one PlayStation (or eight with two linked consoles), with two people sharing one controller. Racing options include single events, tournaments, head-to-head, time trials and chases. As well as the 50 or so racing circuits, there is also a tutorial Driving School for first-timers.

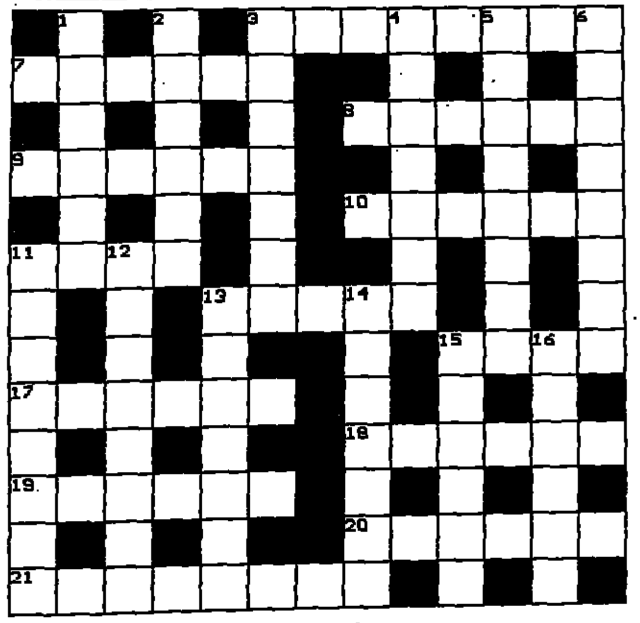
Codemasters must be congratulated for never resting on its laurels. Micro Machines V3 will be one of the *year's most successful console* games, if not the best-selling *PlayStation title of* 1997. If you have not yet entered *Cyberspace Thirty-One there is still* time — but you will have to be *quick as the deadline is* first post on Tuesday, April 8. The star prize is a **luxury weekend in Rome** fit for an Emperor, courtesy of GT Interactive. Our lucky winner plus a guest will be flown to Rome and met at the airport to be whisked off to the city's five-star Grand Hotel, your home for the next three nights. You'll also be booked on three sightseeing tours of the city, taking in Ancient Rome and the Sistine Chapel. The prize is worth £1,200.

Ten runners-up will win copies of **SPQR: The Empire's Darkest Hour** and SPQR merchandise. To enter, you are invited to review either a new, favourite or frustrating game in your collection. Entries must be highly legible and between 100 and 150 words. Please give the full title of your selection, the format on which you have played and the producer of the product.

We are looking for succinct, entertaining and informative entries and marks will be awarded for *constructive observations* and wit. Send your entries, with your *name, address, postcode* and daytime telephone number, to Cyberspace Thirty-One, *Computer* Games and Pastimes, Weekend, *The Times*, 1 *Pennington* Street, London E1 9XN. Normal *Times competition rules apply* and the judges will not enter into any correspondence.

This week's Top Tip, winning him a *Microsoft title*, comes from Peter Hambley of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear: "Kidnap a policeman just out of training school and tell everyone you've got the latest PC."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1060

ACROSS
3 Spinal column segment (8)
7 Desert illusion (6)
8 Not *sympathetic* (6)
9 Attractively old-fashioned (6)
10 Way to get 17: card game (6)
11 Ribbon: type of window (4)
13 Artificial human (*Jew. legend*) (5)
15 Get higher (4)
17 To the other side (6)
18 Work for seven players (6)
19 NY river; Mrs —, Holmes's landlady (6)
20 Straight: manage (6)
21 Tiny details (8)

DOWN
1 S. Am. mammal, its wool (6)
2 An outcast (6)
3 Giddy feeling (7)
4 Temper outburst (7)
5 Port on heel of Italy (8)
6 Right to be heard (8)
11 Angels (8)
12 *Richard* Brinsley —, dramatist (8)
13 *Not have enough* (2,5)
14 One programme in series (7)
15 Prince —, 17C admiral; — Bear (6)
16 Quick drawing (6)

SOLUTION TO NO 1059

ACROSS: 5 Exeunt 7 Unable 9 Ricochet 11 Pant 12 Coper 13 Rebuke 15 *Bistro* 17 Growl 19 Dine 20 Glisters 22 De luxe 23 Porter

DOWN: 1 *Metric* 2 Itch 3 *Subtle* 4 *Sent* 6 Exceptional 8 Black Forest 10 Corot 14 Bogus 16 Regret 18 Losers 19 Dodo 21 Impi

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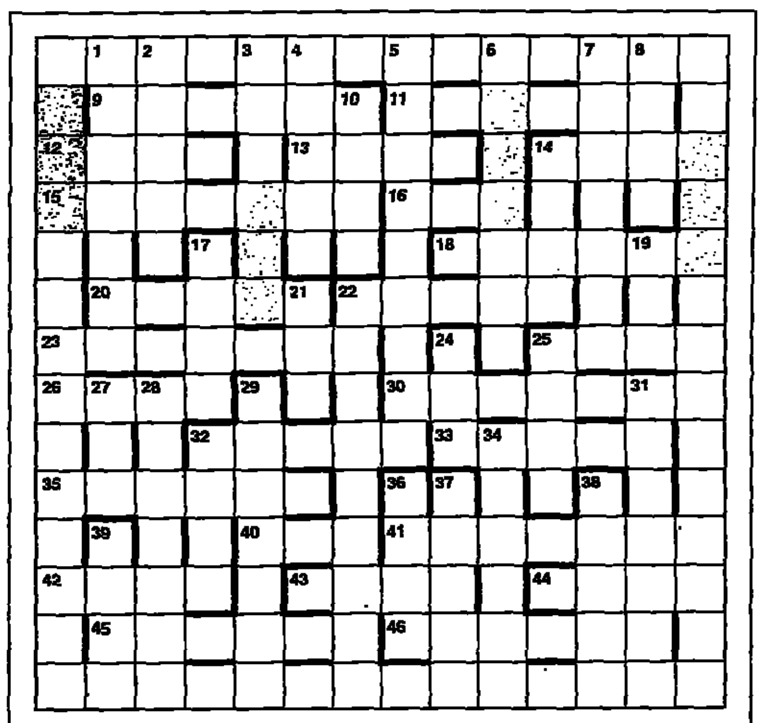
THE LISTENER CROSSWORD

No 3404: Memorable Occasion by Monk

AN AUTHOR and a novel (both spelt as in ODQ4) run clockwise in peripheral squares. Every clue comprises a normal definition and a subsidiary indication which gives the defined light to be entered plus one extra letter, appended either before or after the light. In the cyclic order in which the clues are presented, but not starting at 9 across, the extra letters spell out a message concerning several clued lights. 24 down is in the OED, and *Chambers* (1993) contains all other necessary information, including the components of a two-word light.

ACROSS
9 What might move *small* ones to reach out and about, grabbing anything very small?
11 Odd job around east wing of adequate *crumbling country* house?
12 *Affected with* fear in historic journey round about centre of Leeds.
13 Wife has forgotten Germans.
14 Mildew rotting one lost mignonette in the Grampians.
15 Exercised wickedness surrounded by squaddie renegades with braces regularly removed.
16 Spenser's their heartless shocker.
18 Supercilious contemptible person's *mostly regularly* accommodated.
20 *Bitter, tatty, worn-out.*
22 Spurious cause of wear on the toilet!
23 Following a type of cat around the continent gives abnormally-dry hair condition.
25 A god's endless element?
26 Supplies deaths.
30 Bill in Dublin is in common role as a poet.
32 *Old firm heroes reportedly split by edges of stage.*
33 Victim of a psychosis of one without the ego?
35 Dried *ginger root, for instance, needs perennial plants.*
40 It's a shame it's a non-trigonometric function.
41 Disentangle knotted annular piece of string.
42 Search thoroughly for mark of the Beast in a hoax.
43 Reword without a passage.
44 Dunkirk's true invasion (see earlier).
45 A particular speed of a ring, but not one in engines.
46 Query: "What might make a connection, catching front of pullover?"

DOWN
1 Exert strength jumping up round a tree.
2 *Ghastly headless US state's university (not Ohio).*
3 What is unusually common to slaughterer and stallholder?
4 One deer on Ecstasy broke down.
5 *What would make one so itchy with signs of hard scaly skin?*
6 A bone from a bird swallowed in mounting confusion in parts.
7 Locally, one invalid without a type of base of an overgrowth.
8 *Be contained by outskirts of Ullapool at end of week one there?*
10 Violent cause of quarrel showing no sign of gratitude.
14 Seeks to gain wife over Jock's bit of fluff?
17 *Slanting cut* first seen in pollarded ebony, fir, larch, ash and aspen?
19 Some Africans use it (heroin) after heading for Tanzania.
21 Glasgow Herald's supplement's right-of-centre section in 32.
22 Indirect reverse index in a dictionary.
24 Abandoned pursuit opening with last upset.
25 Deaths of old took effect, buried in trench for the most part.
27 Lost unfledged hawk on byways (every second?).
28 Chapter in a story on centre of reused round old coins.
29 What floats and can barely be seen in a service station in London.
31 *Has heartless Pagliacci not included her?*
32 Rush about and be cordial.
34 Romany woman (old dear) seen around first of September and parts of November and December in the Middle East?
36 A sequence in succession, neither beginning nor ending.
37 Almost seating restless beings.
38 Question leaders of kids' fashion about hair styled as a crop.
39 Man appearing on quiz regularly makes female cross.



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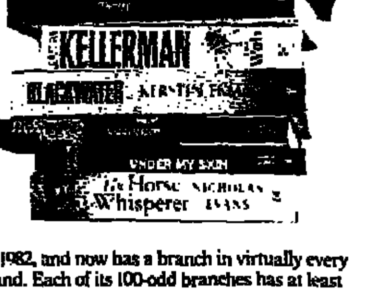

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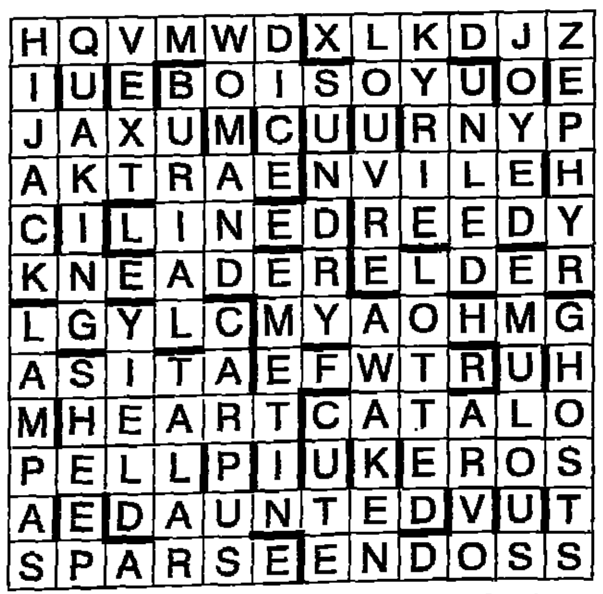

H	Q	V	M	W	D	X	L	K	D	J	Z
I	U	E	B	O	I	S	O	Y	U	O	E
J	A	X	U	M	C	U	U	R	N	Y	P
A	K	T	R	A	E	N	V	I	L	E	H
C	I	L	I	N	E	D	R	E	E	D	Y
K	N	E	A	D	E	R	E	L	D	E	R
L	G	Y	L	C	M	Y	A	O	H	M	G
A	S	I	T	A	E	F	W	T	R	U	H
M	H	E	A	R	T	C	A	T	A	L	O
P	E	L	L	P	I	U	K	E	R	O	S
A	E	D	A	U	N	T	E	D	V	U	T
S	P	A	R	S	E	E	N	D	O	S	S

ELHQGFKUOICMWYARNVXJZTBSPD

Solution to No 3401
Enigma Variation by Swan

ACROSS: 1. bantam; 6. siesta; 11. blanket; 14. ludo; 15. hawk; 16. protyl; 17. parry; 25. acini; 28. abattis; 31. jills; 34. legit.

The winner is: C.Rossington of North Hykeham, Lincoln.

The five runners-up are: M.Harington of Warminster, Wiltshire; B.Nuttall of Crawley, West Sussex; G.Aspin of Swindon, Wiltshire; Roy Abrey of Epsom, Surrey; M.Arnold of Harpenden, Hertfordshire.

Statistics relating to 1996 crosswords, including personal record, are now available to senders of an SAE (from overseas stamp exempt) at least 220mmx110mm to J.E.Green, c/o 63 Green Lane, St Albans, Herts AL3 6HE. It would be helpful if applications could be kept saparately from current puzzle submissions.

SATURDAY RENDEZVOUS

TO RESPOND TO AN ADVERTISER [illegible] call 0891 111127 (Calls cost 50p per minute at all times) and then follow the simple voice [illegible] advertiser has the facility for you to leave him/her a voice message.

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CONNEXIONS is the friendship club that puts single Christians in touch with each other. Ring us on 0181 906 4467.

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E.C. The Executive Club of St James's, London: Brighton & York, 07000 499 8833

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NEXUS Unattached? Are you aware that there are Nexus members all over the country who want to meet you and include you in their life. (There are parties, walks, holidays etc. as well as the opportunity to meet individually.) To find out more ring for the Brochure. (012374) 71704, (0181) 367 6328, (0113) 2445186, (01869) 338801, (0141) 221 1090, (0181) 944 8629, (01256) 831599, (0121) 472 1968 or (01202) 730356. (Not a Dating Service or Marriage Bureau.)

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LADIES

ABSOLUTELY fabulous female, very attractive, tall, superb figure, glamorous, sophisticated with charm & wit, extends an invitation to a cultured, charming, humorous, successful gentleman of very good appearance, 45-60, to come dance with me cheek to cheek in London, Paris or New York. Who knows, this could lead to a wonderful romance! Photo & phone no. would be so nice. Please Reply to Box No 4077

ALONE? Living in the Cambridge (E Anglia) Enfield Hertford or London areas? Join Elite Introductions. We will do our best to help. For local offices call 0181 374 4001 or 0500 103410

ANDOVER/Salisbury 25 mile radius. The start of something special. Elite Introductions 07000 781 981 open 7 days

ARE you a tall Gentleman, 50-60 with a Royal Ascot voucher. A tall elegant blonde also with a voucher is waiting to meet you. Berkshire area. Box No 4186

BEFRIEND me in Belfast. Professional lady enjoys golf, walking entertaining, bridge, travel. Seeks 50+ successful, fun loving similar interests male. Photo please to Box 4214

BERKS, blonde, 35, 5'8", tactile, outgoing, workaholic, loves food, Oz reds, the outdoors, & log fires. Seeks strong character to sort her out & enjoy the above. Photo please. Box 4196

BRIGHTON, Worthing, Eastbourne, H Heath & Horsham. The Executive Club at Brighton Marina 01273 818100 E.C.

BRIGHTON & Sussex - The Executive Club at Brighton Marina 01273 818100

BRISTOL area introductions. To meet that special someone locally call Chris 0117 973 6663 Elite get closer: 7 days

BUSINESS woman, 30, dark hair, blue eyes, attractive, divorced, no children, shouldn't have to advertise. Midlands based. Please reply if you shouldn't have to look. Photo please. Box No 4203

CARING, intelligent man wanted to share some of life's pleasures with tall, slim, fit, well educated lady 47, N/S. I enjoy walking, swimming, theatre, music, dining out. Lancs. or nearby. Reply to Box No 4155

LADIES

COUNTRY LOVING 42 year old, interested in gardening, cooking, sailing, tennis, theatre, GSOH, seeks similar professional, easy going, fun-loving gentleman.(N wilts)Box 4086

CREATIVE, impulsive & witty London/France based brunette, fit & curvaceous, seeks true friend & partner (50-60). If you're tall, big hearted, life loving & seriously up for renewal, contact Box 4193 with photo.

DAMSEL in distress, languishing on South Coast, needs rescuing! Very artistic, funny, broad interests. Needs nice man. (40+). Reply to Box No 4174

E.C. the Executive Club of St James's, London: Brighton & York, 07000 499 8833

E. SURREY, Kent, Sussex. Elite Introductions have local offices in Brighton, Croydon, Redhill and Tunbridge Wells. Call Claire on 01883 744405 or Jackie 01273 270975

EAST LONDON/Essex Genuine man seeking a love for all seasons not a seasonal love. Elite Introductions freecall 0500 497775 or 01277 260180

ESHER and surrounding areas (KT/SM postcode). Why be alone when one phone call can put you in touch with gentlemen of like minds Call Elite Introductions 0181 547 2577

ESSEX Elite Introductions for prof/bus people: 7 days 9am - 9pm freephone 0800 854751

FRENCH lady, very young looking 40, sophisticated, educated, well travelled, fit, plays golf. WLTM educated man 38-45, who is caring, considerate, sensitive, London based or 20 mile radius. Photo to Box No 4210

FULL of fun widow young 68, attractive, smart, caring, affectionate, solvent, varied interests, music, travel, bridge, n/s WLTM gentleman genuine, kind GSOH for friendship London, S E/ N Kent Box 4147

FUN, charming, intelligent, successful, N/S male with wicked sense of humour - if this is you read on! I'm an attractive, successful Oxford based woman, mid 40's, trying to balance business and pleasure but lacking the catalyst of a true soul mate. My interests include music, good food and wine, sunshine, driving fast cars and generally having fun - life's too short to just hang around. If you're looking for someone to iron your shirts I'm not your girl! If not, do write with photo to Box No 4028

GOLFER? Attractive, slim, feisty, successful, 37, golf nut would like to meet handsome funny guy 35-45 for romantic golf holidays, and all the other things people do when not playing golf! Photo appreciated. London based. Box 4175

GOOD-LOOKING busy career girl, mid 30s, intelligent, sophisticated and warm, WLTM attractive prof male 30-40, sincere, confident and fun, to enjoy friendship/romance in London. Photo pleaseBox No 4134

GOOD personality, good looking, good humour, good career, good background, good sense, Good Heavens I'm Normal! 40 something, divorced woman, all of the above WLTM similar gentleman 40-55. Photo preferable. Reply Box No 4211

KENT/Bromley/SE London. Looking for that special person? Why make 100 calls when one will do. Call Elite Introductions. 0181 658 7576

KULTURED, creative, practical workaholic, dry SOH, loves music, opera, theatre, eating out & books. Seeks mature friend 5'8"+, 40+, N/S for evenings out & evenings in. Berks. Please Reply to Box No 4197

LET'S get real, gentlemen. Will the very young, sexy lady of your dreams handle problems with your ageing parents, first family or the Inland Revenue? Prepare candlelit meals w/o M&S? And make memorable conversation you can repeat in public? No? So how about an American woman, sgle, 43, exec w/US media, & Ldn, brn hair, grn eyes, 5'5", GSOH, honest, reliable, creative, loyal, well-shaped romantic who seeks sgle or divorced professional man, 40-55, honest, kind, GSOH, n/s, solvent, self confident, educated, responsible, romantic by nature who enjoys people, w/ends away, entertaining, trvl, peace and quiet. Letter and photo pls. Please Reply to Box No 4126

LIVELY, good looking, curvaceous, 43, cultured, City lover, N. London, seeks a compatible man. Box No 4131

LADIES

LOOKING & hoping to meet an energetic, romantic, caring, educated & adventurous gentleman 58+. Someone who loves books, seriousness & fun. I am slim, fit & attractive with an enquiring mind. I love home life, travelling, boating, cycling - well, most things & would love to share again. Photo/Letter & tel no. would be nice. London based with heart in the country. Reply to Box No 4208

MEN phone now! West Midlands/Warwickshire over 500 local genuine clients Call Elite Introductions 0121 323 3314

N.E. HANTS. Tall, slim, said to be attractive, 51 year old lady. WLTM kind and caring gentleman, 55-65, 6' plus, to share a happy life. Interests: home, family, country walks, theatre, travel. Reply to Box No 4049

NICE, normal bloke wanted by nice normal girl, 34. London based. Reply to Box No 4209

NOTTS/Leics/Lincs Success after success for gentlemen. Elite get closer... Call now for free details 0115 937 6104

OXFORDSHIRE. Gentleman call Elite Introductions and experience the human touch... all the way. 01869 337373: 7 days

PRETTY, petite, passionate, prof woman, lots of fun, seeks intelligent, sensitive prof man, late 50s/60s for love and laughter (for life?) Box No 4125

RICHMOND to Runnymede, Kew to Denham (all TW/UB postcodes) seeking that special person? let us help. Call Linda at Elite 0181 580 0028: 7 days

STYLISH Australian Lady, 50, visiting London July-August, seeking the perfect English Gentleman for social outings / friendship. Please reply with photo and letter to Box No 4207

TREAT yourself to the best. You can't afford to compromise call E.C. on 07000 499 8833

UNCOMPLICATED Female, 50, generally contented and with a philosophy of life, WLTM n/s male, 45-55 with similar approach for friendship/ relationship. I enjoy music and being outdoors. N. Yorks. Please Reply to Box No 4064

VERY attractive, elegant lady, seeking equally attractive man for pleasure/recreation. Must be sincere, loyal & caring (photo appreciated) (N.W.). Please Reply to Box No 4135

WEEKEND walks, taking in the scenery. Out galleries, concerts & dining out. A romantic at heart, I am a well travelled, tall, elegant & sophisticated lady. If you are a like-minded prof. male, between 60-70, please reply in writing enclosing a photo to Box No 4132

WE promise you five top quality dates in 6 weeks if you wish E.C. who else?

WIDOWED lady farmer, 45, warm, gentle, intelligent, WLTM gentleman of integrity and humour. Worcestershire. Please reply to Box No 4051

WINCHESTER attractive, slim, hard working professional lady looking to relax in the arms of a generous, kind, honest professional gentleman 45-55. She likes theatre, classical music & country walks. Please send letter & photo to Box No 4171

WRITER/editor, 40s, sociable, humorous, discerning. London based. I enjoy films, cartoons, books, music, country walks, wood fires, fly fishing, France, fine wine, the unusual in life. Looking for laughter & love, a best friend, a real partner. If you are in your mid 40s/mid 50s, still find life exciting & fun, are a supportive friend & financially secure, plse write with recent photo to Box 4191

YORKSHIRE Humberside 100's of lovely ladies 'Elite Intros Freecall 0500 525240

YOUR first good quality date within the week if you can make our grade. Phone and talk to us we're friendly E.C.

ZZzzz Wake up! Close Encounters is open Saturday & Sunday Call free 0800 141 141

GENTLEMEN

ABSOLUTELY fabulous lady sought by tall, fit, athletically built, handsome 35 yr old. Fun to be with, I have twinkling blue eyes & a big smile. I'm honest, sincere, romantic, articulate, smart & reasonably intelligent. I have a great career & enjoy life. Looking for a stylish, classy lady (up to 35), who is very good looking (but not vain), loving, articulate, intelligent & great fun to be with. A soulmate. Northwest. Photo please to Box No 4198

ABUNDANCE of men, but not enough ladies for our Turkish Schooner Parties. Can you help? Lazy, sun-drenched holiday, & wonderful food. Call DayDreams 0171 687 8921

ANDOVER/Salisbury 25 mile radius. The start of something special. Elite Introductions 07000 781 981 open 7 days

ARE you 33-41, tall, slim with GSOH? Do you enjoy country walks, music, opera, travel, good food & wine? Company director, 41, 5'10" seeks romantic n/s lady to share these things & more. Based W. Surrey but will travel to meet that special person. Photo appreciated. Box No 4158

ATTRACTIVE female who is happy to combine Oriental and Western cultures and interests sought by kind, fit, athletic, handsome, wealthy Englishman. Ideally you would be under 40, intelligent, feminine, slim, N/S, have a liking for the better things in life and able to share a fun packed, permanent relationship with lots of TLC and mutual pampering. I'm 56, divorced, London based and would appreciate a photgraph and telephone no with your reply. Box 3880

GENTLEMEN

ATTRACTIVE 6ft prof man, 38, Indian, fit, kind, easy going. Enjoys laughing, alternate therapy, theatre, travel, Yoga. Seeks slim/medium build, warm female, any nationality. London/SE. Box No 4161

BRIGHTON, Worthing, Eastbourne, H Heath & Horsham. The Executive Club at Brighton Marina 01273 818100 E.C.

BRIGHTON & Sussex - The Executive Club at Brighton Marina 01273 818100

BRISTOL area introductions. To meet that special someone locally call Chris 0117 973 6663 Elite get closer: 7 days.

GENTLEMEN

CARING man, Cheshire, 42, professional, n/s, good looking, ready for friendship and romance, seeks attractive lady to share country walks, good conversation, theatre, humour, travel and quiet nights in. Reply & Photo to Box No 4065

COMPROMISE or stay selective? It's the people we decline that made our reputation. E.C.

E. SURREY, Kent, Sussex. Elite Introductions have local offices in Brighton, Croydon, Redhill and Tunbridge Wells. Call Claire on 01883 744405 or Jackie 01273 270975

GENTLEMEN

EARLY retired but not retarded and just 58, fortunate to have own non grey hair and enough teeth and be 5'10". I am an agreeable imbiber but cannot abide smokers. A lady without too many commitments, perhaps missing a man who likes to wear the trousers, might find me worth a line. I live south of Jnt. 8 of M25. Box No 4089

ECLECTIC, entrepreneurial patron of Art, 61, energetic, fit, seeks tall, sensual muse/Girl Friday, ideally about 30, n/s, maybe single parent. Please reply to Box No 4070

GENTLEMEN

EAST LONDON/Essex Genuine ladies seeking a love for all seasons not a seasonal love. Elite Introductions freecall 0500 497775/01277 260180

ESHER and surrounding areas (KT postcode). Why be alone when one phone call can put you in touch with discerning ladies of like minds. Call Elite Introductions 0181 547 2577

ESSEX Elite Introductions for prof/bus people: 7 days 9am - 9pm freephone 0800 854751

EXTREMELY Young looking, v. attractive, 48 y.o., dual residence, based in Europe, excellent education, career, living/moral standards, sophisticated, romantic, needs beaut lady life long partner. Please Reply to Box No 4173

FUN-LOVING, happy businessman, mad about boats, also likes travel, cooking, walks, dining out, good wine. Seeks slim, attractive lady, 35-46, N/S, GSOH for fun, adventure & romance sharing life. Can you help? London/South Coast. Photo please to Box No 4200

HEIR Rolls Royce, 50's, 6' 1", black hair, n/s, unattached. University educated, London SW1. Property Rome. WLTM curvaceous young lady who appreciates love, tenderness & fidelity for companionship or more. Please reply with photo to Box No 4102

HUMOROUS, 36 years old, Asian Doctor, based in Cardiff, would love to meet lady, between 20-40, for a long term romantic relationship and possibly marriage. Race, looks unimportant. Any area, can travel. All replies answered. Reply to Box No 4042

IF you're an active, outgoing, petite, 40ish n/s prof. lady looking for a genuine relationship with a solvent, sincere, caring man, who (when he's not working too hard) skis, sails, plays golf badly and enjoys travel, music, theatre and a bottle of St. Emillion; then why not test the chemistry and see what happens? Cotswolds. Please reply to Box No 4061

GENTLEMEN

I'M a physician and a scholar but also a businessman and materially successful. I am artistic, practical (problem solver), spiritual (humanist) and open-minded but not politically naive. I am happy and have a love of life and humanity, especially children. I am heterosexual, empathetic, passionate and generous. Sometimes I am insecure but I am not emotionally demanding and never jealous. I am good at kissing and cuddling and small meals! My wisdom and warped wit are much in demand. I am middle-aged, handsome, attractive, athletic, hygenic and well dressed. I have adventured in dangerous and exotic locations and am about to write my memoirs. The snag is that I seek, for permanent relationship, a dramatically high flying woman with similar qualities. She should be under 45 (and over 25 if she is to enjoy driving my cars). In spite of being a high achiever she should be able to be self indulgent and to accept pampering. Conventional beauty and other characteristics are not important, but I like undomesticated free spirits. I live in the world, but have a base in North Wiltshire. If you favour me with a reply I will send you a photograph and an audiotape. Please Reply to Box No 4199

INTERNATIONAL businessman, 50, 6' tall, fit, Dublin, London, Paris based, sophisticated lifestyle, involving travel & entertaining WLTM warm, intellectual, interesting, cosmopolitan lady 35-50 to share theatre, opera, horseracing, polo, & romantic evenings. ALA. Photo please to Box No 4151

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LAST two good guys (BC, cultivated, thirties, fun loving) seek pair of petite unattached ladies (27-35) similar background for friendship/fun: letter with photo please. Box No 4189

LOVELY lady 32-42 to meet London based fun-loving sporting type who enjoys holidays in the sun, jazz/soul, golf, racing, wining/dining. Photo please Box No 4192

LOVE requires him to be intellectually stimulating, unattached and at least able to match your lifestyle. You're lucky to date one person of this quality a year without us. E.C.

LOVING, adventurous, affectionate, Surrey based professional man, 29 seeks similar lady with GSOH. Photo appreciated. Please Reply to Box No 4162

MAN with a mission WLTM a petite feminine lady in her mid/late 30s to show him the meaning of life, 45 yrs old company director who likes sailing, badminton & unusual activities. E. Sussex based. Reply with photo to Box 4169

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PROFESSIONAL City type, whose get up and go has not got up and gone at 47, seeks soulmate with sense of humour and fun to share cultural and entertaining pursuits - music, theatre, travel and more. Letter with photo appreciated. South East. Please Reply to Box No 4142

RICHMOND to Runnymede, Kew to Denham (all TW/UB postcodes) seeking that special person? let us help. Call Linda at Elite 0181 580 0028: 7 days

ROMANTIC, retired widower, own house, car, told I am a pleasant character, WLTM an attractive lady, 45-60, for happy future. Photo appreciated. Herts/North London or there abouts. Please Reply to Box No 4101

SINGLE father, very young 48, 6'7 tall, slim, attractive, easy going with 2 Junior School aged girls seeks n/s lady who likes children and has a cheerful disposition. Photo appreciated Based N Yorks Reply Box No 4185

GENTLEMEN

SENSITIVE Upper Class girl 20/30s, n/s, sought by eminently suitable tall Oxbridge widower. Wife sadly died aged 34, daughter 14. Old enough to be your father but full of go. Listed house, Kent village. Total love, loyalty. Everybody would approve. Nobody need ever know Reply Box No 4071

SHARE Burgundy in the spring with this Francophile, 53, managing director who is passionate about music, food & especially wine. He WLTM a slim, petite lady, younger, who like him, is tactile, full of fun & enjoys architecture & travel. Essential ingredient is the ability to laugh at oneself. Londonbased. Photo please to Box No 4183

SLIM, submissive gentleman 48 seeks unattached dominant lady for lasting relationship. N. Wales based. Box No 4179

SPRING Mornings and Winter firesides. Love the country too? 40's, looks much younger, warm, caring and GSOH. WLTM attractive 30's female. Photo please. Box No 4128

SUCCESSFUL City director, early 40's, well travelled, enjoys the Arts, good food & interesting conversation. WLTM slim, attractive lady, 28-38, to share the quality of life. Please reply with photo to Box No 4137

TALL, professional, attractive gentleman, 51, seeks warm, caring, cheerful, country loving lady with whom to share life's thrills & spills. Photo app. Please Reply to Box No 4074

THE girl of my dreams is hiding from me! 36 year old single, fit, healthy and good looking, no ties, no hang-ups. Difficulty meeting likewise. Surrey based photo plse and I promise to write reply Box No 4080

TREAT yourself to the best. You can't afford to compromise call E.C. on 07000 499 8833

TREE MAN, Denbighshire, own land, 43, 6 ft, thin, English, divorced, one 13 yr daughter. Seeks bright, funny, attractive jeans/jersey/wellies female under 40, preferably living nearby. Interests: countryside, sunshine, fresh soup, strolling, laughing & pitted prunes. Photo & tel no. appreciated. Please Reply to Box No 4217

TWO professional males, mid 30's, London based seek two likeminded girls, probably 25-35 for a "double-date". Interests include tennis, music, cinema & eating out. Please Reply with photo to Box 4181

WARM, loving, good-looking & cuddly Jewish male 56 who is based in NW London seeks a similar N/S lady 46-51 for a wonderful future. Photo apprec. Box No 4164

WAVING, not drowning. Fit, very young forties, Nordic looking, creative businessman. Enjoying a country lifestyle while working in the international fast lane. WLTM fit, together lady who would not normally reply to an ad. Midlands & Southeast. Photo & reply to Box No 4167

WORCS/GLOS Good looking lawyer, 43, one child, likes music, walks riding seeks attractive female 30+. Photo please. Box 4178

WOULD you like to sail for 6 months in warm waters, ski in winter, enjoy walking, cooking, theatre with 6' fit & strong N/S gentleman? Are you 40-55 slim attractive adventurous lady who wants a loving long term relationship? Then we must meet. Do write with photo to Box No 3532

YORKS Male seeks slim 30s female of integrity, likes hills, travel, books, films, nice people, wild places. Box 4008

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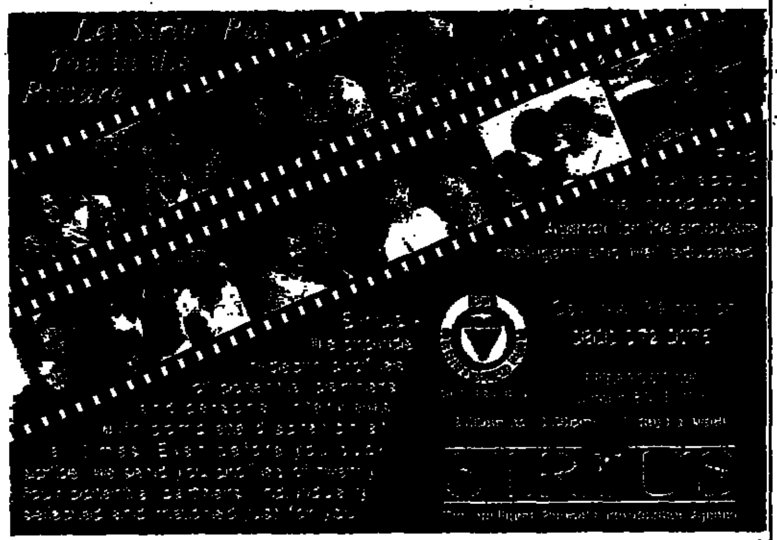

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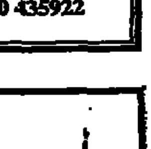

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LONDON PARTIES

1st	Dinner, Piccadilly Restaurant
3rd	Cocktail party, Kensington
5th	Cocktail party SW1
5th	Dinner Dance top hotel W1
6th	Cup Final, Wembley
6th	Lunch party W11
7th	Cocktail party Kings Road SW6
10th	Cocktail party hotel bar W1
11th	Dinner Restaurant N11
14th	Cocktail party, Strand
15th	Turkish Soirée Bloomsbury
16th	Dinner Chinese at Potters Bar
16th	Dinner top restaurant Chelsea
17th	Cocktail party Wine bar SW3
19th	Cocktail party pvt. memb. club
22nd	Dinner top restaurant WC2
24th	Dinner restaurant WC2
25th	Celebrity luncheon Strand
25th	Dinner restaurant N1
26th	Dinner top restaurant St James's
26th	Dinner/dance Italian W1
26th	Gold Cup at Sandown
29th	Cocktail party top hotel W1
30th	England v Georgia Soccer Wembley
30th	Dinner well known hostelrie SW1

PARTIES OUTSIDE LONDON

Thu 3rd	Warwick, Dinner
Fri 4th	Preston, Night Club
	Manchester, Dinner Chinese
	Chester, Dinner Italian
	Harrogate, Bistro
	Bucks, Round the World send off party
Sat 5th	Peterborough, Dinner
	Wirral, Dinner dance
	Lancashire, Dinner dance
	Cheshire, Under 45's
Sun 6th	Stratford upon Avon Dinner party
Thu 10th	Cheshire, Social event
	Stratford upon Avon Theatre
Fri 11th	Cheshire, Dinner
	Stoke, Night club
	West Yorks, Bistro
	Stevenage, Dinner
Sat 12th	Bolton, Dinner dance
	Newcastle upon Tyne, Dinner
	Banbury, Dinner
	Derbyshire Dinner
	Croydon, Dinner Italian
	Cheshire, Dinner Chinese
	Wirral, Dinner
	Leicester, Dinner/dance
Wed 16th	Bedford, Dinner
	Wetherby, Dinner
Fri 18th	Harrogate, Dinner
	Wirral, Dinner
	Southport, Jazz & Blues Night
	Peterborough Mediaeval Banquet
18-20	Spring in Paris
Sat 19th	Harrogate, Dinner
	Richmond, Dinner French
	Cheshire, Dinner dance
	Clitheroe, Dinner
Sun 20th	Bradford, Dinner
Tue 22nd	Woburn, Dinner
Thu 24th	Harrogate, Cocktail party
	Lancashire, Cocktail party
	Northampton, Dinner
Fri 25th	Stratford upon Avon, Dinner
	Southport, Dinner French
	Cheshire Shirley Bassey in Cabaret
	N. Yorks 4x4 driving
Sat 26th	Newcastle upon Tyne Dinner
	Blackpool, Dinner
	Chester, Dinner
	Lancashire, Dinner
	N. Wales, Murder W/E
	Croydon, Dinner
	Doncaster, Dinner
Sun 27th	Chester, Lunch
	Yorkshire Moors walk
Wed 30th	Manchester Concert
	Peterborough, 10 pin bowling

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A taste of life with the fast girls at Brands
Page 5

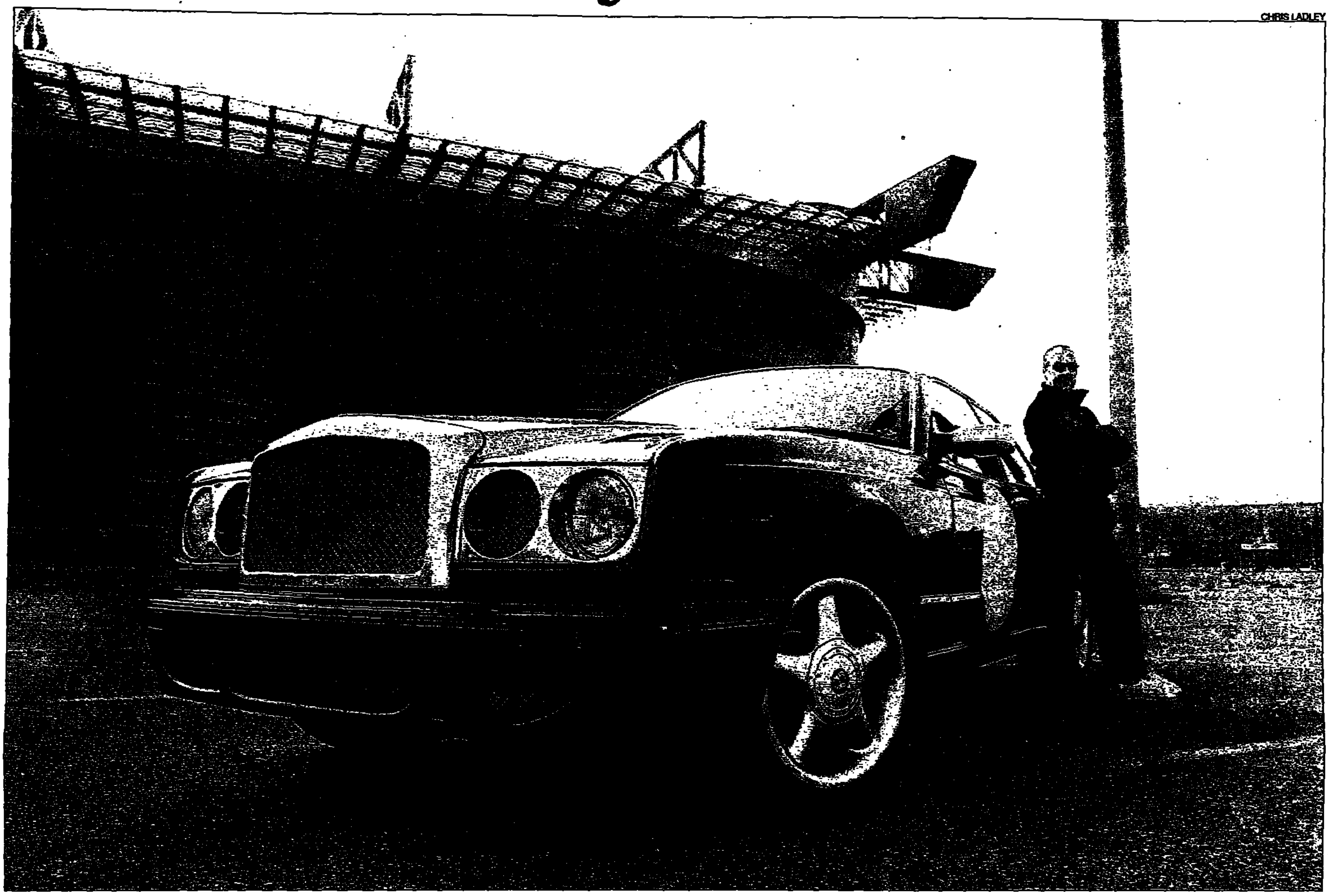
CAR 97

The car that takes the strain of quick braking
Page 10

SATURDAY APRIL 5 1997

Bespoke Bentley that's a brute

Would you do this to a shiny new limo? **Ian Morton** drives with the Italian who did



CHRIS LADLEY

Proud owner Carlo Talamo with his Bespoke Sports Bentley. The beefed-up engine and weight savings make for awesome acceleration — a good thing, because Talamo plans to let his mother drive it

In *Crewe, they scarcely* believed it. They had gone to all that trouble over fine lines and facets to make a big car look powerfully compact yet graciously poised. They had lavished upon it coachwork of unrivalled quality and had sculpted a wood and leather interior in the finest English tradition. They called the result the Bentley Continental R, and they were charging a mere £193,428 for it.

Then along came this fellow *from Milan who wanted* almost everything modified, *with a great brutal metal* and wire mesh face on the front, the rear seats removed, the trim stripped out and replaced with machined aluminium and leather quilting, and the engine enlarged to seven litres. *And lots more* — over 50 features were to be radically changed. And when they told him it would more than double the price, he shrugged and said, "OK."

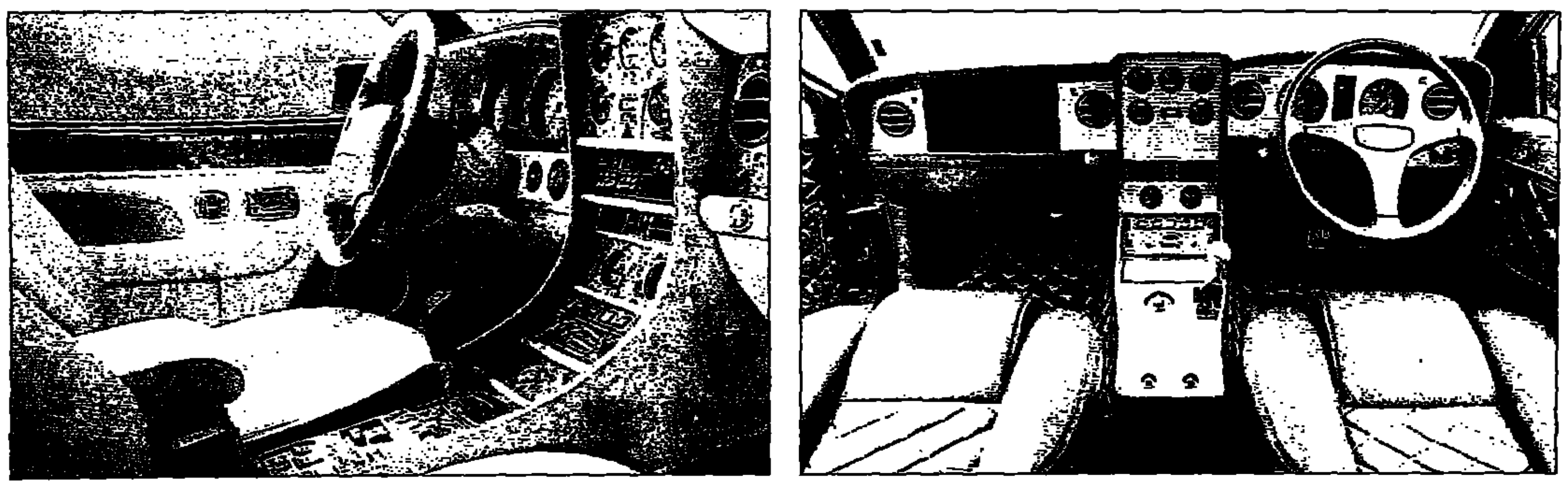
It was their own fault. Rolls-*Royce and Bentley have taken* to inviting customers to request *individual* treatment on their cars, and have an extensive department, Mulliner Park Ward, to carry out special work. But work this special was unheard of.

He *had his own* way, of course. Carlo Talamo is not only their best customer in the whole of Italy, but the man in whose hands their fortunes in that country *effectively rest. So the car he* wanted, the one they call the Bespoke Sports Bentley, is a reality — about £500,000 worth of reality, the most expensively customised Bentley ever.

And the company has grown proud of it, calling it a "high-performance, lightweight road-and-track derivation of the *Continental* R with prominent Bentley sporting tradition, *visual features* and styling cues".

Yes, plenty of those, though in sheer performance terms the car seems at first to provide a graphic illustration of the law of diminishing *returns. All that work*, all that expense, and on paper, the Bespoke looks only *modestly* quicker than the model on *which it is based.* The Continental R shows 0-60mph in just over six seconds, for example, while the Bespoke pulls the time down to 5.4. The *standard* car is credited with 151mph, while the Bespoke *hauls 160. Useful, but worth* all that money?

The power emerges *in real* traffic. The enlarged V8 unit, Cosworth-prepared with new camshaft and turbocharger and tuned to take super-unleaded petrol, develops 670lb of torque at only 800rpm (the standard engine gives 553 at 2,000), and delivers 425bhp *over the original's* 385 via a seamless automatic box.



Just a trim: out went the traditional sculpted wood of the original Continental R, left, and in came machined aluminium and quilted leather

Much of the expense has been incurred by weight-shedding, and the car is 240kg lighter than the R. That is like not having the fattest of those three tenors in the back.

The resultant ability of the Bespoke to respond to a bit of free road-space *has to be* experienced. Where the factory model takes about 3.5 seconds to surge from 50 to 70mph, the Bespoke needs little over two, the process accompanied by a great rising chord of exhaust wail fit to fill a cathedral. You are thrust into your seat and you stay there, a helpless captive, until the accelerator lifts.

Come the curves and the lateral forces are equally assertive, for the road-holding is *monumental.* The *racing* harnesses which have replaced *normal seat belts are no* conceit. Nor is the huge leather-*clad roll-cage which* replaces the rear seats.

The creaking of the roll-cage's leather against the leather of the thickly padded roof lining is the loudest and most persistent sound. "I could stop that by using leather cream, but I *like it,*" says Talamo. "It is the sound of a living car."

Other oblique attitudes surface. Though it will live in Italy, the car is right-hand drive. "If my business goes *wrong and I have to sell it, that* will be easier in England or *Japan," he explains. There are* no airbags. "With the harnesses, you don't need them, but there are too many rules anyway — let me die in my car if I want to."

And the suspension is softer than standard, so *that* the body cants through bends. "I like body roll — roll is natural," says Carlo. "Cars ride flat and suddenly they quit. Roll gives you more signals."

The softer ride pays off over Milan's tram lines, which is *handy* because the Bespoke will be daily transport. Not *that it is unwieldy in close* traffic. After a few minutes of *familiarisation, I had no hesi*tation going for rush-hour gaps let alone seizing opportunities on the *autostrada.*

I was encouraged by the *sharp* reactions of the keen Italian drivers, plus their obvious respect for a very special motor car.

"It is like driving a boat," says Talamo. "Your mother could drive it." His mother will, he says. Signora Talamo is 74 and has lost her licence three times for speeding. He is *proud of his mother and his* cars. A true son of Italy.

His cars. Definitely plural. He has more than 50, mainly British, including "six or seven" Minis, four AC Cobras,

Continued on page 2

BUILDING A BESPOKE BENTLEY

- **TAKE ONE** 6.7-litre Continental R (list price £193,428) and modify as follows.
- **EXTERIOR:** flare front and rear wheel arches, shorten sill strips. Remove bonnet and replace with polished, ducted aluminium. Remove chromed radiator shell and replace with aluminium. Install mesh grille, blank off inner headlamps, and cover with mesh, upgrade other lamps, blank off direction indicators. Replace headlamp surrounds and door mirror caps with polished aluminium. Delete all bumper brightwork, mount flush direction indicators, apply mesh to lower apertures. Install Aston Martin-style aluminium filler cap. Fit 18-inch five-spoke wheels with low-profile Goodyear tyres. *Finish in Milano Green with white racing decals.*
- **INTERIOR:** remove rear seats and all rear comfort items, refit area *in black diamond-quilted leather,* install *leather-covered roll-cage.* Replace front seats with manually adjusted seats. Remove door trim, carpets, rear console, and driver's armrest, and install black diamond-quilted leather on doors and black quilted everflex on floors. *Install oak door-capping and waist-rail to achieve* continuous "bath-tub" effect. Remove standard fascia, install *engine-turned aluminium panels, revise all switches* Transfer lock, window, and boot latch controls to driver's door only. *Replace* standard gearshift with aluminium cranked stem and knob. Remove airbags, install three-spoke steering wheel, remove tilt-steering facility. Install drilled stainless-steel pedals. Remove fuel tank, install 18-gallon racing-spec fuel cell. Remove spare wheel, reposition battery.
- ***MECHANICAL:** Enlarge V8 engine capacity to seven* litres with new camshaft, new turbocharger, *revised* cylinder *heads. Install ram-air intake, extra cooling. Tune for super* unleaded 98-octane fuel. Install traction-control system and high-performance brakes. Remove cruise *control. Modify* exhaust system with no main catalyst and twin tail pipes.

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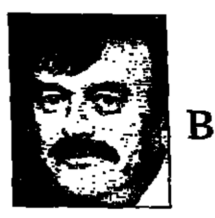
To travel in hope is not to arrive

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



Peter Barnard

More reliable cars mean more breakdowns: now there is a paradox to start us thinking. But there is no other *logical explanation for the fact that* the motoring organisations were as busy as ever over the Easter weekend. Manufacturers sell heavily on reliability, so why is that chap standing at the side of the road with steam coming out his radiator (and his ears)?

The answer is that cars may change, but people don't. We put more faith than we like to admit in machines, in spite of the second law of natural physics: if it can go wrong, it will go wrong. Although the British are inclined towards pessimism, we make a touching exception for cars.

We believe that a vehicle that has taken us from, say, Chiswick to Wembley every day of our working year will cheerfully chug from Chiswick to Penzance and back in a weekend at *speeds* ranging from the untaxing 70mph of motorways to the taxing crawl of holiday jams.

Part of the problem is the sophistication of the machine itself. It must be at least ten years since I did anything in the engine compartment more difficult than changing a fan belt. Lift the bonnet of most modern cars and we might as well be looking at the propulsion unit of a Boeing 747.

Sealed-for-life batteries mean that we ignore them completely, forgetting that the battery may be all right but the terminals can be altogether a *different matter* (smear them with petroleum jelly, or even Vaseline, when you buy the car and you won't regret it).

Indeed a survey sent to me by the RAC shows that in 1996, more than 10 per cent of call-outs *involved either a flat or a faulty* battery. That means that 325,000 drivers *had to summon* the RAC because of battery problems. This is a case where developments in technology have worked for us and against us.

Modern batteries are better than they once were but they give little warning before packing up. Any *sluggishness* in *starting* usually means the battery needs replacing. And sealed for *life* means sealed for the battery's life, not the driver's. A battery lives for three years and after that both *it* and *its* owner are on borrowed time.

Water? The advent of header tanks means that we no longer have to open the radiator itself. In fact the last time I had to do that was in Saudi Arabia, nearly 20 years ago: the cap came off with such force that it knocked a dent in the underside of the bonnet.

That fearsome prospect is long gone, yet any AA or RAC patrol will tell you that the first time some of the Easter travellers thought about water was when it had turned to steam and was obscuring their vision. "The funny thing is," one *AA man told me*, "people will have umpteen bottles of water inside the car in hot weather but they haven't considered giving the *engine any*."

Tyres? The standard advice is to check them at least once a week and before every long journey, but who does that? No, nor me. Large capacity fuel tanks and highly efficient engines mean that drivers spend less time at petrol stations, where we are most likely to check *oil and water levels and tyre* pressures.

Another interesting aspect of the RAC survey is that alternator, carburettor and starter motor problems come fourth, fifth and sixth in the causes of breakdowns. I am not sure what to make of this: either these cars are not serviced *often enough, or the service does* not always cover these items. I have no idea exactly what a 10,000-mile service on my car covers and I doubt that many of us do.

But I ought to know. The bottom line here is that engine-*management systems and generally more* sophisticated cars ought not to be treated as if they are infallible or as if they will bite us if we touch them. This summer, nobody with a serious and unavoidable breakdown wants to wait several hours *for help because* 50 people who haven't attended to the basics are being sorted out elsewhere.

One less cylinder — that's the Corsa Sting

Stuart Birch enjoyed finding that good Vauxhalls come in threes

Just turn the ignition key, drive a few yards and you will know that the Vauxhall Corsa Sting is *not like most other cars.*

The distinctive beat, beat, beat from beneath its bonnet raps out the message: there are only three cylinders. As speed rises it sounds almost like a turbine. It is unobtrusive *and surprisingly smooth.*

For those who reckon value for money includes at least a four-cylinder engine, the fact that Vauxhall has had the temerity to lop off a cylinder might cause a fit of apoplexy — but *it* works. *It is designed to* save money and reduce pollution, and Vauxhall believes it is very much how small cars' engines should be.

The well-equipped Corsa Sting goes on sale on May 2 and is expected to be priced at about the level of the four-cylinder Corsa 1.2 litre, £8,000 — £10,000.

With 973cc and four valves *per cylinder, it produces* a modest 55bhp but that is enough to get the Corsa to 93mph, although reaching that takes some time. But each *gallon of fuel should take the* Corsa an average of almost 50 miles.

The reasons for giving the Corsa Sting only three cylinders centre on the pursuit of economy via mechanical efficiency. *Three cylinders instead* of four means less friction, less weight and more response at low engine speeds.

Just losing a cylinder, though, was not enough to achieve a really meaningful gain in efficiency. Developed *in General Motors Europe's* German Technical Centre (Vauxhall is part of GM) the engine's list of technology highlights is long. Its hydraulic tappets are said to be the smallest ever developed for a *production car engine. And its* fuel injection is a sequential type, producing fine jets of fuel and air to aid both economy and cleaner emissions.

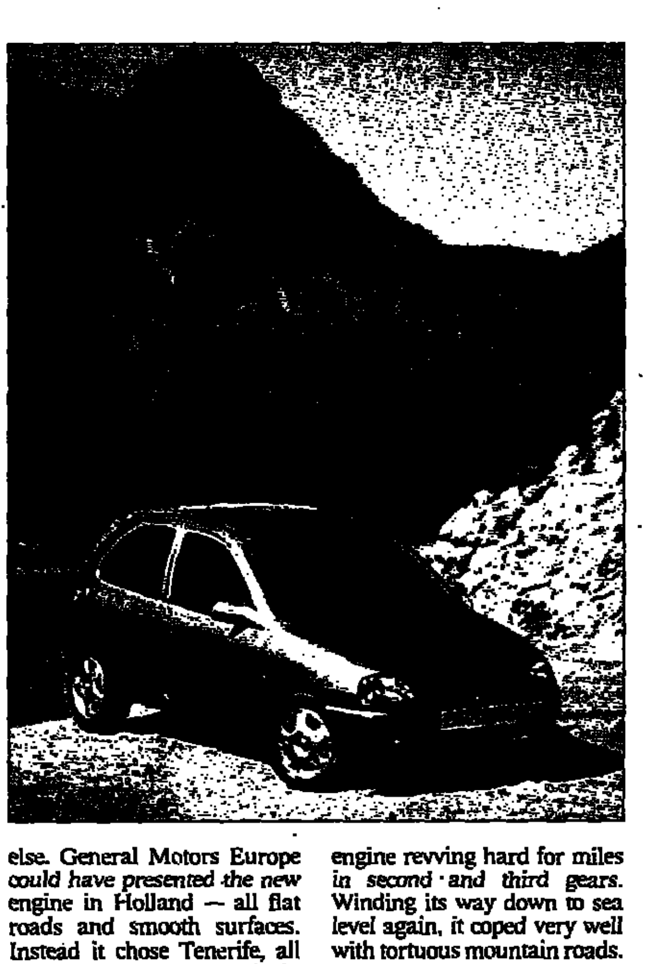
"Smart" electronics help the engine start more quickly, which is *another fuel saver.* The engine is carefully balanced to reduce vibration.

All this advanced technology may sound impressive, *but typical Corsa owners are* unlikely to be that interested; they will just know that the engine is not "normal". Won't they be a little wary? Nick Reilly, Vauxhall's chairman and managing director, *believes they have no need to be:* "A three-cylinder engine is obviously very different. But achieving low fuel consumption and emissions is very *important* to us and the new engine gives big advantages in these areas."

So that's the technology and how Vauxhall's boss regards the new power unit. But converting advanced automotive *engineering theory into* every day practice for the *school run or 100 miles* on the motorway may be something else. General Motors Europe *could have presented the new* engine in Holland — all flat roads and smooth surfaces. Instead it chose Tenerife, all mountain roads, hairpin bends and bumps.

I took the little Corsa Sting on a *punishing drive from sea* level into the lava strewn landscape of Teide National Park and up to the observatory perched more than 7,000 feet *up the mountains.*

The Corsa is no Hale-Bopp comet, but it moved onward and upward manfully, its little engine revving hard for miles *in second and third gears.* Winding its way down to sea level again, it coped very well with tortuous mountain roads.



Lotus has worked to improve the suspen*sion of all the latest* Corsas and handling is good. On the motorway it cruised happily at 75mph.

The car I tried was also *fitted with* Vauxhall's *new* optional electric power steering. It has been designed to take the effort out of steering without demanding too much *engine power. Fitted with an* electronic control unit, it only takes power when needed, which saves fuel.

The three-cylinder Corsa Sting also benefits from revisions that are applied across *the Corsa range, including* front and rear styling changes, improved ride and handling, and the option of air conditioning on some models. The range also now includes a new 120mph 1.6-litre sport model.

The Corsa *Sting's three-*cylinder engine was first revealed in General Motors *Europe's MAXX concept car at* the 1995 Geneva motorshow. Now it is a production reality. Variations on the theme are expected and the three cylin*der is a modular design which* could form the basis of a *larger capacity four cylinder.*

Although many companies have researched three-cylinder engine designs, until now Daihatsu has been one of the *few makers to put them into* production cars. Now Vaux*hall has joined them.* Others are likely to follow.

STING STATISTICS

Engine: Three-cylinder, 973cc, 55bhp.

Performance: Top speed 93mph, 0-62mph in 18 seconds.

Fuel consumption: Urban 37.2mpg; extra-urban 58.3mpg; combined 48.7mpg.

Equipment: Three-spoke alloy wheels, radio/cassette, metallic paint, sunroof.

Price: To be announced.

Balanced triple engine is unobtrusive and miserly

'What would W. O. Bentley make now, I asked myself'

Continued from page 1

a bevy of Morgans, and his ultimate choice for twisty mountain roads, a Caterham Super Seven. And Bentleys — a yellow Azure, a vermillion Brooklands, and a black *Continental R.*

He hardly needed another. But to comprehend the Bespoke, you must understand the man. A self-confessed "crazy and desperate guy", he comes from a wealthy family whose money evaporated when he was ten, but he had already developed a love of classy British vehicles.

"My head was full of engines, nothing but engines," he says. "*If they ever set up a* hospital to treat engine-dependency, *I shall be their first* patient."

In 1984, aged 25, he capitalised on his enthusiasm and some motorbike-racing *success and persuaded* Harley-Davidson to let him become their Italian importer — no great deal, it might have seemed, for the previous year they had sold precisely three bikes in Italy. Now, thanks to Carlo, there are 24,000 Harleys in the country. Later, he added Triumph, and now sells 600 a year. Today his *bike firm, Numero Uno,* accounts for a third of all big-bike sales in Italy.

Then he persuaded Rolls-Royce and Bentley that he was their best bet in a previously dull region — again *only three sales in a year* — and in its first year, his new firm, *Gialloquaranta* (it means Yellow 40) shifted 33, mainly Bentleys. Carlo thinks Italy will take 100 cars a year. Crewe is not inclined to doubt him. No wonder he gets his own way.

He works *for it.* "*I live cars* and bikes 24 hours a day, seven days a week," he says, "and sometimes longer than that. I have no family, no villas, no servants. I live in an hotel next to my showrooms.

"I have been buying cars as a drug. I have been buying happiness. Cars are everything. Cars are passion," he declares.

"I asked myself what W. O. Bentley would make now, and so I did this car. It is a toy, a Mini-Cooper for rich guys. The factory was shy of it, and still is, I think. They treated me like a crazy guy at first, but as the car started to take shape they started to say. 'This is good.'

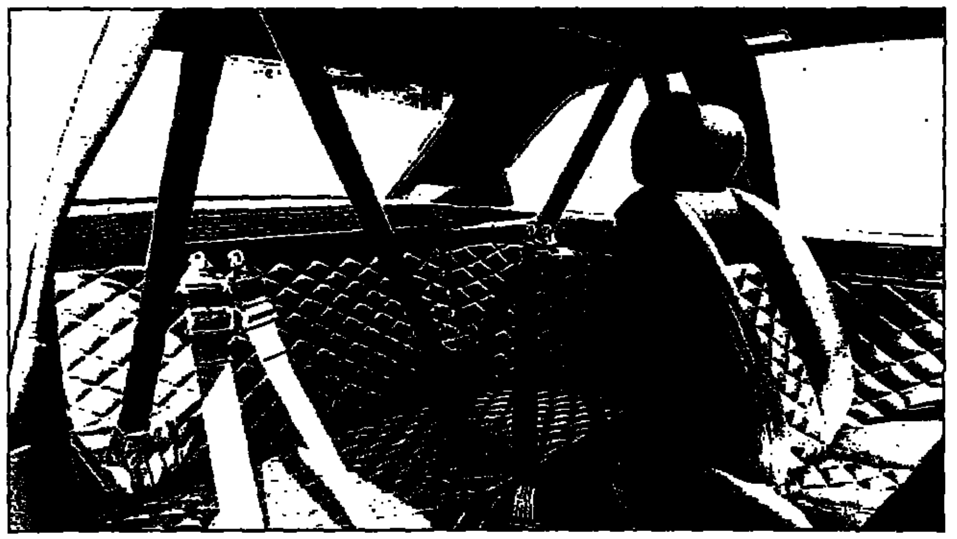
"They are crazy too, a crazy factory which exists outside the rules. But I wanted to demonstrate my confidence in *the factory. We need to keep* this factory alive."

So will the Bespoke remain unique? Conscious that he is a Bentley dealer as well as an enthusiast, Carlo has declined his right to exclusivity, and given the factory permission to produce other Bespoke Sports Bentleys. It may well happen. *An English fan of the* marque who spotted the car during construction instantly offered £100,000 over cost.

And last week, a distinguished visitor who had heard of Carlo's car turned *up at the Milan showroom* — none other than the Sultan of Brunei, the world's richest man and Crewe's most ardent collector of its cars. He asked to see the Bespoke. It would be unusual if His Serene Highness did not add one to his legendary hoard.

Carlo's imagination, meanwhile, has still some way to run. "I am trying to persuade the factory to take an initiative and build a shorter, wider, lower, two-seater version of the Azure with more power and a tougher name," he says. "We would call it the Blue Train Bentley after the famous Wolf Barnato car. *It* might appeal to maybe ten guys worldwide."

He would certainly be one of them. I dubbed him the Sultan of Milan. He liked the sound of that.



Roll-cage replaces rear seats; weight saved equals the heaviest of the three tenors

AA GRIDLOCK GUIDE

● LONDON
A406 *Upper Edmonton;* major roadworks on Angel *Road (North Circular* Road).
A306 Hammersmith Bridge closed both ways.
A2400 Bloomsbury; work on Upper Woburn Place and the east side of Tavistock Square.
A5 Kilburn High Road reduced to one lane both ways, with no right turn into Belsize Road.
M4 junction 2 and A4; weekend and overnight closures.
M1 junction 2; major roadworks.
A3 Kingston Bypass; Northbound lane closure between Shannon Corner (A298) and Coombe Lane Junction (A238).
A307 Kingston upon Thames; off-peak single alternate traffic on Richmond Road.
A232 Wallington; roadworks on Croydon Road.

● SOUTH-EAST
M40 junctions 1a-3; contraflow.
A130 Sandon; roadworks on Southend Road.
M27 junctions 8-10; contraflow.
A31 Ringwood; contraflow.
A41 Watford; lane closed eastbound.
M20 junction 4 West Malling; roadworks, and slip-road lane closures.
M25 junctions 8-10; restrictions and lane closures both ways.
A272 Haywards Heath; temporary lights, long delays.

● SOUTH-WEST
M5 junctions 18-19; contraflow.
A30 north of Bodmin; contraflow.
A35 Christchurch Bypass; lane closure.
M5 junction 13; only one lane open.
A40 Cheltenham; temporary lights.
A417 Barnwood Bypass; contraflow in place between the Zoons Court and C&G Roundabouts.
A37 near Shepton Mallet; temporary lights.

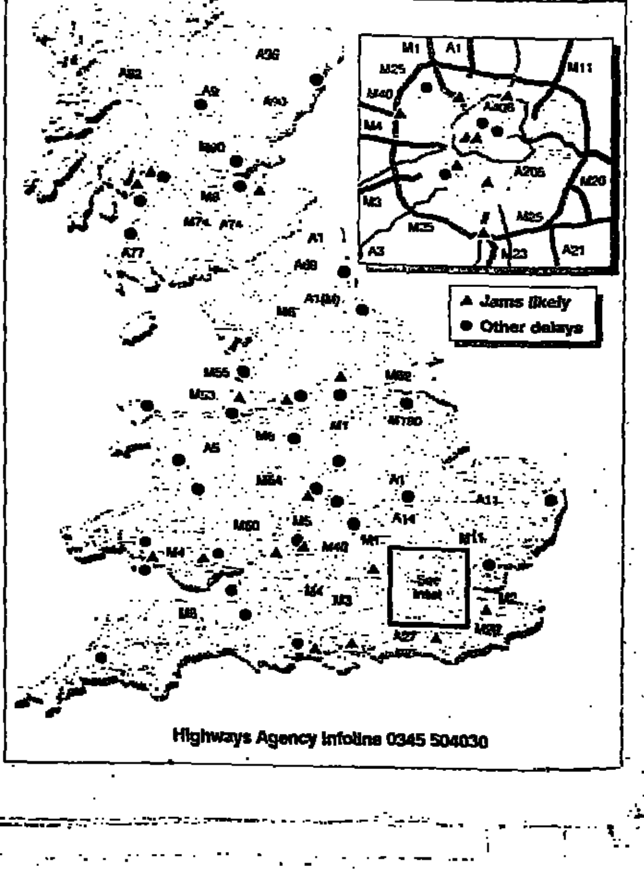
● MIDLANDS AND EAST ANGLIA
A1 Alconbury; only one lane northbound.
A6 *Lockington; temporary* lights between M1 and Sawley Island.
A18 near Broughton; *roadworks at Briggate Lodge* Roundabout.
A1064 Acle Way Bridge; maintenance work.
A41; *temporary lights at* Sandford Bridge.
A500 *Stoke area;* contraflow.
A5 west of M1 *junction 12;* roadworks.
A41 *Wolverhampton;* temporary lights on Bilston Road.
B4109 Coventry; temporary lights on Stoney Stanton *Road.*
M6 junction 6; slip road *from Salford Circus to the M6* north closed. Diversions.

● NORTH
A62 Hollinwood; one lane northbound. Major evening delays expected.
A627 Bardsley; roadworks.
A585 near M55 junction 3; roadworks on Fleetwood Road.
M53 junction 2; bridge maintenance work. Only one lane open each way on Moreton spur.
A567 Bootle; closed northbound between Merton Road and The Strand.
A19 Middlesbrough; lane closures weekends and *overnight.*
A1058 Newcastle; lane *closures on the Cradlewell* Bypass at the cornerhouse *junction.*
M1 junction 47; lane *closures and speed* restrictions.
M1 *junction 42;* narrow lanes both ways.

● WALES
A48 Carmarthen; temporary lights and lane restrictions on Pensarn roundabout (A484).
A494; Drws-y-Nant, Rhydymain. Temporary lights
A5025 City Dulas; one-way system, width and weight *limits.*
A4077 Gilwern Viaduct *closed both ways.*
A44 between Llangurig and *Eisteddfa Gurig; temporary* lights.
A483 *Fabian Way;* lane closures both ways.
A4067 Mumbles Road; major roadworks.
A483 Fforest-fach; lane closures both ways on Carmarthen Road.
A472 Pontypool; contraflow between Pontymoile and the Heron Roundabout.

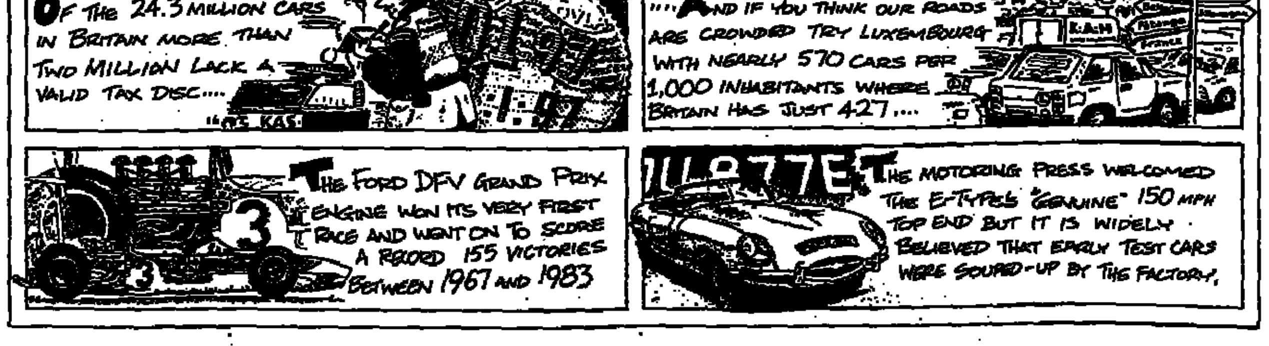
Scotland
A96 Bridge of Don; only *two lanes available in peak* periods.
M8 junction 2; major roadworks, with lane closures.
A923 *Dunfermline;* roadworks on Bothwell Street *at Saint Leonards Street.*
A8 Port Glasgow; eastbound lane closures at Newark Roundabout.
A710 *Straiton Road;* contraflow between Captains Road and the A720 City Bypass.
A78 Wemyss Bay; temporary lights on Greenock Road.
A9 Calvine; roadworks on Perth to Inverness Trunk Road.
M8 junction 30 (Erskine Spur) closed eastbound. Contraflow westbound.
M898 Erskine Spur; overnight roadworks with lane closures.
A17 south of Girvan; temporary lights for roadworks at Ardmillan. Expect delays.

MAJOR ROADWORKS



Highways Agency Infoline 0345 504030

AUTOFAX by David Long and Les Evans



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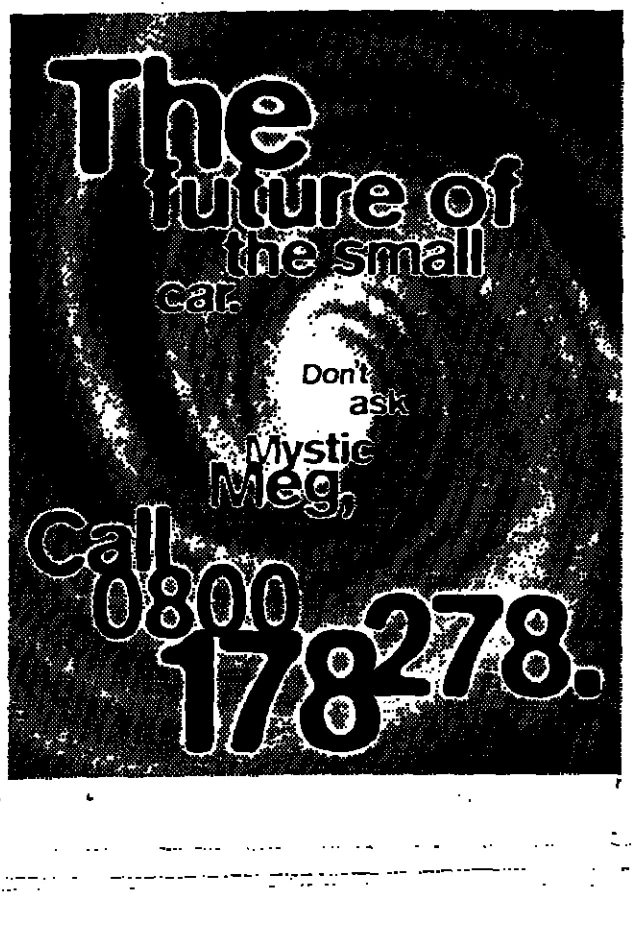

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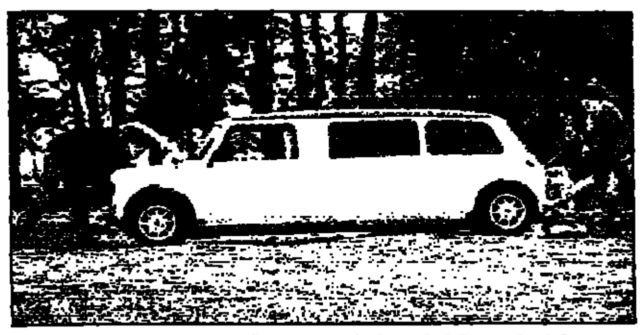
Is a 35ft Mini stretching a point?

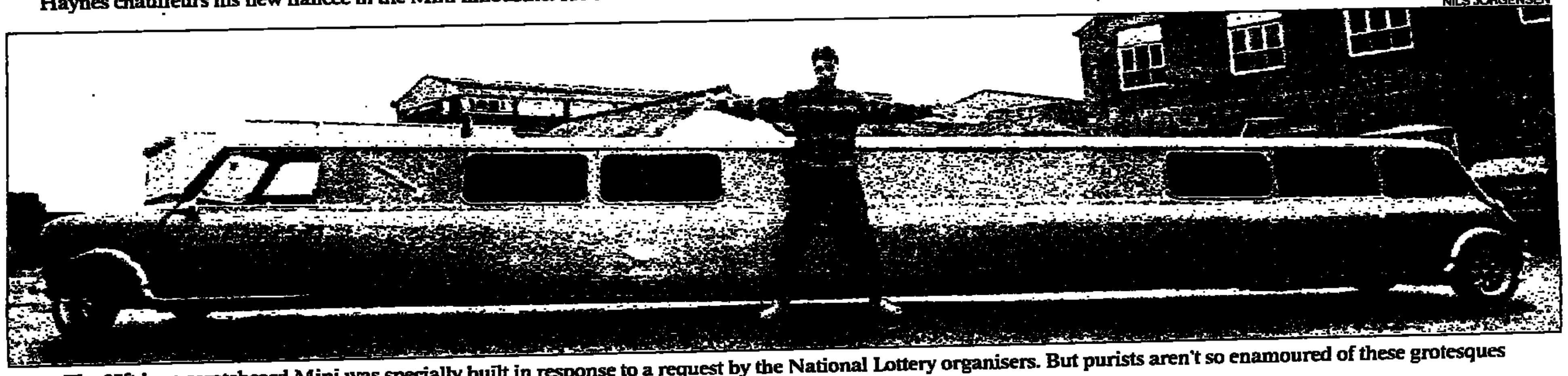
Eve-Ann Prentice talks with the back-yard builders who took Issigonis's world-famous design just that little bit far


Lindsay Haynes's 14ft-long Mini took him 4,000 hours

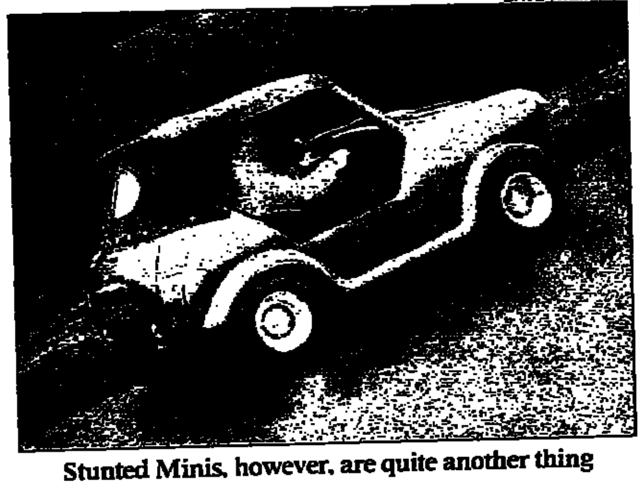
STEVE HILL/NEWSTEAM

Haynes chauffeurs his new fiancée in the Mini limousine. He decided to build it after he broke up with a previous girlfriend and needed something to do with his time

NILS JORGENSEN


The 35ft-long scratchcard Mini was specially built in response to a request by the National Lottery organisers. But purists aren't so enamoured of these grotesques

DAVE WIGMORE


Stunted Minis, however, are quite another thing

Lindsay Haynes is one of a breed of men who love stretch marques. Now, after a long, long haul, spending 18 months creating a radically elongated version of the car originally famed for its small size, his customised Mini is being billed as one of the big attractions at a motor show in Birmingham this summer.

The 14ft-long Mini, with leather and walnut trim, took him 4,000 hours to build, at the same time as he was holding down a full-time job. He limited himself to just four to five hours' sleep a night while his obsessive mission was underway.

So why has Haynes gone to such lengths to transform a car which is normally perfectly happy at 10ft long? "Because people know I am interested in cars that are not quite normal, a chap in the pub suggested I make a stretch Mini," he says. "There have always been Minis in my family, but I thought this couldn't be done. By the end of the week I had bought a couple of Minis for £200 and started cutting the bodies up to make the front from one and the rear end from another."

> 'The Lottery wanted it to be even longer'

The final result sparked such interest in the Mini fraternity that the National Lottery contacted him to ask whether he could make it even longer for its television advertisement for scratchcards. He couldn't.

The point was that Haynes's pride and joy is a pampered car which has had masses of luxury touches lavished on it, while the lottery people wanted a 35-foot model which merely looked convincing on the outside — and would be ready within two weeks of the request.

"There was big money involved, but there was no way I could do that in such a short time and eventually they had one built elsewhere," he says.

Elsewhere transpired to be Wimbledon, where a model-making company came up with the purple, neon-lit version which is used to illustrate one of the more bizarre uses to which a *£50,000 win on* a scratchcard could be put.

The organisers of the Mini World International motor show, at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, say they hope that this stretch Mini will also be put on show on July 5 and 6.

Haynes, 26, from Groby, near Leicester, began his project after a relationship with a girlfriend ended "and I needed something to occupy me". So no one had to wait in the wings while he spent almost every free moment working on the car and just snatching meals when he could. He is now engaged to someone else.

"The hardest aspect of making the car was to get it to look right looking down the side of the car. The Mini is built of curves, you have one big curve from the front to the back. It took a lot of painstaking work, using a very delicate high-speed cutting tool, an airsaw.

"I was slicing slivers and welding them in place. Compared with the sides, the roof was easy," he says.

The cost of materials to build the stretch-Mini was about £10,000, but it is now believed to be worth around £50,000.

Haynes says he now uses the car to raise money for a children's charity, partly by selling advertising space on the car's elongated exterior.

The scratchcard Mini, meanwhile, cost about £15,000 to build, according to Frank Farman, one of the two partners at Eagle Models in Wimbledon who made it. "We also used two Minis for the front and rear, but then we used fibreglass for the middle and installed windows and sunroof. It was all done in about three weeks," he says. "It has a standard Mini engine — but it is a pain to steer."

Mini-enthusiasts have mixed feelings about the elongation of their favourite veihicle. Monty Watkins of *MiniWorld* magazine, says: "I love the idea of Lindsay Haynes doing it as a curiosity, but in general, what is the point? The Mini is about being small and economical." Watkins believes there are just five or six roadworthy stretch-Minis in Britain, and only about a dozen in the rest of the world.

"They go the other way as well," he adds, "they are called shorties and are only about five or six feet long and there are a lot more of them."

The longest stretch-limo in Britain in believed to be a new 35-foot Lincoln Super Stretch run by Londoner Ian Berne, which can be hired for £80-£100 an hour. And the most stretched in the world is reputed to be a 65-ft long, £500,000 monster called the Ultralimo, which is based in California. It is the length of a cricket pitch, though it has been said of this 36-seater "the difference is that you can get movement out of a cricket pitch".

Mini World International, Mike Kennington 0121-767 3536; Ian Berne Limousine Hire, 0181-500 9469.

Hedgehog April Fool falls flat

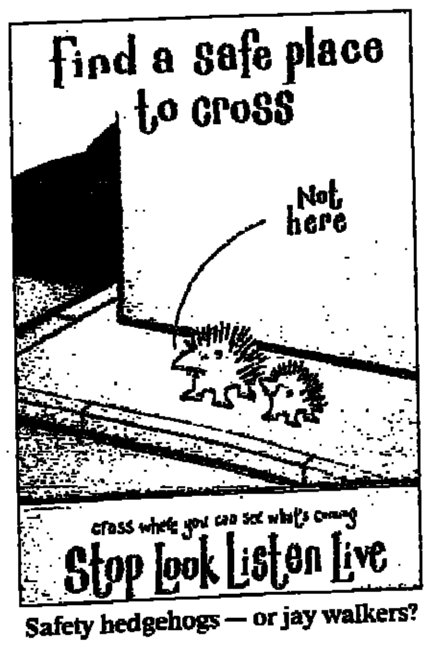
BMW's spoof advert missed the point, says **Helen Mound**

It was the April Fool's trick that fell as flat as the squashed hedgehogs it mocked — the so-called "BMW that communicates with the animals".

A full-page advert placed in *The Times* on April 1 claimed that, "In children's fiction, it was Doctor Dolittle who talked to animals. Today, thanks to doctors at the Bavarian Institute of Zoology, it is the engineers at BMW." It went on to explain that BMW had developed Wild Acoustic Information Link (WAIL) that emits a warning to scare animals off the road, reducing the risk of their being injured.

But the advert was a hoax. In keeping with a decade-long BMW UK tradition it was an April Fool's joke, the only clue being the words, "Available from April 1 on selected models." Except that the joke was on BMW, as a spokeswoman for the British Hedgehog Preservation Society points out, "We've been selling these things for nearly ten years."

Being run-over is no joke for the hundreds of thousands of hedgehogs that end up flattened on Britain's roads each year. And picking dead wildlife out of the front bumper isn't much fun either. The 650 April Fools who phoned the WAIL Hotline for more information before midday on Tuesday clearly agreed. Perhaps BMW should rethink its extra equipment list after all.


Find a safe place to cross
Not here
cross where you can see what's coming
Stop Look Listen Live
Safety hedgehogs — or jay walkers?

Developed by Alert Industries in America, where motorists suffer horrendous accidents with deer, moose and other large wildlife, Animal Alert is a wind-driven high-frequency whistle claimed to startle animals to make them run off.

It's not a lot of use if your kids want to spot wildlife from the car, but horses and other farm animals being herded on the road aren't spooked by the whistles because the manufacturers say they don't work at speeds under 35mph. Only at faster speeds are they designed to squeal at a pitch inaudible to humans — similar to a dog whistle — sending birds and animals scurrying into the hedgerow.

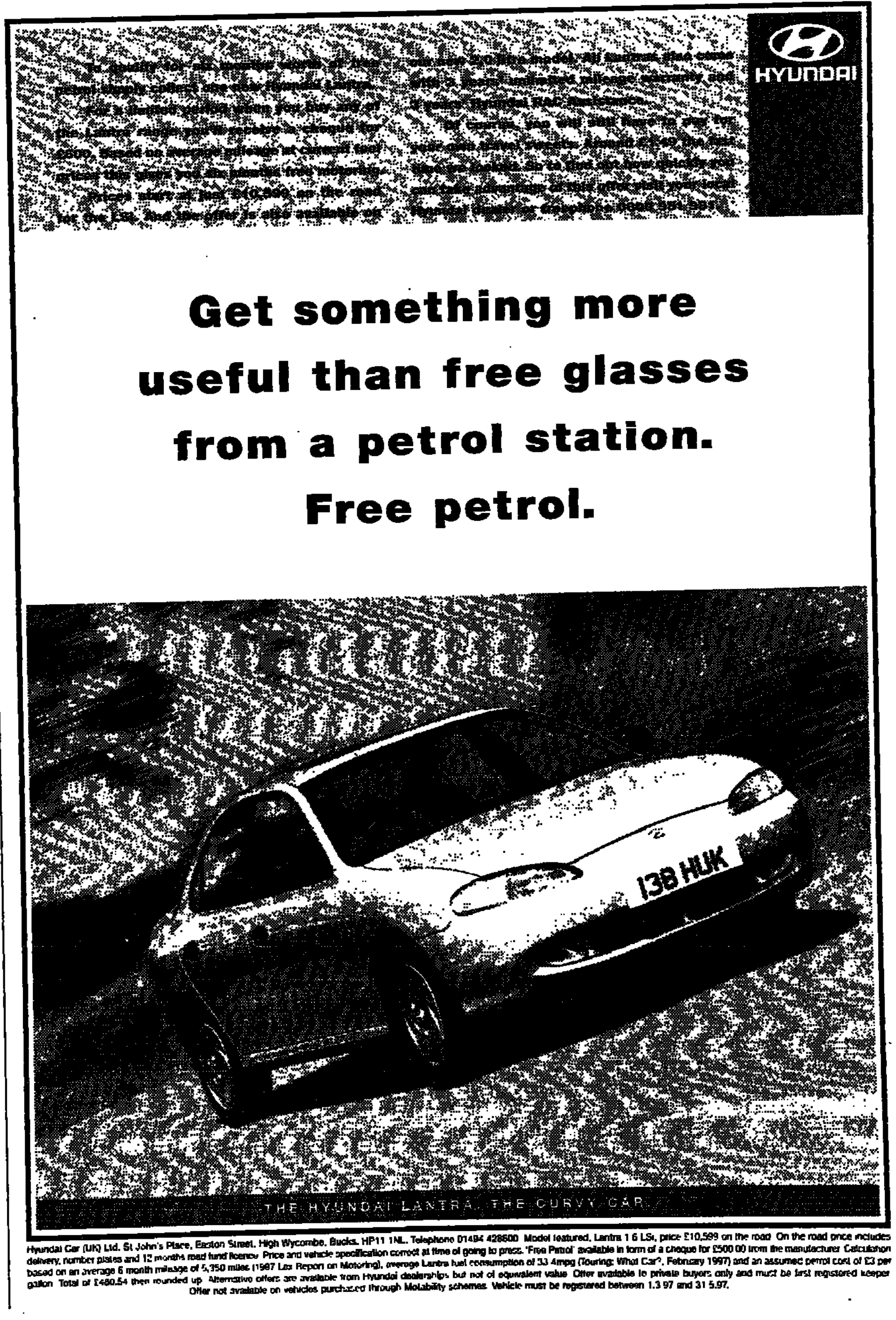
Attached to both corners of the car's front bumper, Animal Alert whistles cost £8.59 for a pair. Delivered by post they come with fitting instructions and according to one tester, who bought a pair after his dog was run-down, they're so effective that he hasn't hit an animal in eight years.

However, following calls from riders worried about Animal Alert startling their horses, the British Horse Society carried out trials at speeds from 35mph to 60mph. They say they failed to get any response, from any animal and reported a "negative" result.

The British Field Sports Society also conducted trials and failed to get a reaction from horses or hounds, and stated: "Riders have nothing to fear from these devices. It would appear that they have absolutely no effect." But during both tests no-one saw any hedgehogs, so perhaps the whistles were working.

Squashed hedgehogs have long been the butt of motoring jokes. The British Hedgehog Preservation Society wasn't surprised by BMW's prank, but they thought it appropriate with Hedgehog Awareness Week just a month away. However, the Deparment of Transport was recently criticised for choosing two cartoon hedgehogs in a £500,000 road safety campaign for 11 to 12-year olds.

The characters appear on television, in cinemas and on children's videos, showing how to cross a busy road and "arrive alive" on the other side. Safety campaigners complained that the replacements to the Green Cross Code man and Tufty the Squirrel had no road sense and were poor role models. But since when have squirrels been good road-crossers?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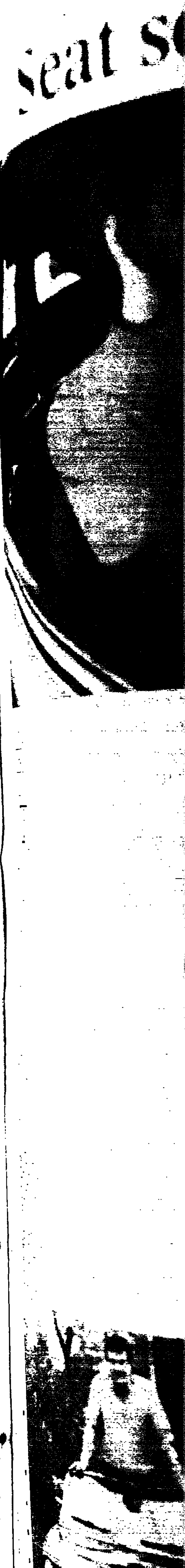

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Seat sells out to girl power

MICHAEL POWELL

Model driver: Jo-Ann Breckon, a former Miss London, races in the Fiesta Challenge and is part of the team teaching potential Seat buyers how to drive on racetracks

Demonstration drives with a difference: a specially picked team of top women racers is touring Britain's tracks to show off Spanish cars, reports **Liz Turner**

The eyes beneath the crash helmet were smiling, almost kindly. Yet they belonged to a monster who could throw a tiny car around a race or rally circuit like a woman possessed.

Barbara Armstrong, World Formula Two rally champion *in Seat's Ibiza Cupra Sport 2.0* 16v rally car, knows when to bark — and when to bite.

For she is one of a bevy of star female drivers gathered by the Spanish carmaker for a six-month tour of Britain, teaching the public to drive on the track and offering a taste of rally driving.

All were gathered by the energetic *Heather McAlpine*, possibly the best-known British fast female who has won trophies for truck racing and the Fiesta Challenge, among many others.

The girls throwing the men around on the tarmac include petite Amanda Whitaker, better known for her prowess in single-seater Formula Vauxhall, *Andrea* Hall, who won the Ladies' RAC Cup in 1996, and Barbara Babbage, who began racing at 14 and building engines *at 16, and went on* to become the first woman to win a round of the British Touring Car Championships.

Former beauty queen Jo-Ann Breckon has proved a formidable opponent in the Fiesta Challenge. She says: "I was Miss London when I was asked to take a celebrity drive in a Fiesta, raising money for the Cancer Trust WOMAC, and I found I was hooked." Her goal now is to get into BTCC, the motorsport with probably most contact bar figure-of-eight banger racing.

So how do men react to being advised, cajoled or bellowed at for braking too early *or being rough with the clutch* by young and pretty women. "Most men find it easier to take criticism from a woman," says my instructor, Natalie Barrett. "They don't have to feel competitive with us."

"Some get a bit grumpy," says Jo-Ann. "They don't like being told what to do by a woman, but most are fine."

Indeed most of the men seemed to be thoroughly enjoying both themselves and the scenery. Being taken around at speed by Barbara Babbage has rattled a few fillings, but no-one has been travel-sick yet.

"So how come you like cars?" one of the chaps asks bluntly at lunch, interrupting a conversation between the instructors of their worst crashes, spins and offs.

"I don't think it's strange to *like cars," says Natalie,* "I think it's normal. I was at university when I decided I wanted to have a go, so I went to *Silverstone* and took a racing course."

"It's the adrenaline rush that gets you," says Jo-Ann. "It's addictive." Suzie Hart-Banks who has taken the chequered flag in a Ginetta G27, an MGB CV8 and 100cc karts, also admits that she gets a kick out of beating men on the racetrack.

Among the other competitors, most of the women agree that the younger men treat them as equals, but the older drivers can be patronising. *"They call you Pet, or Love. I* hate that," says Natalie.

Getting a good car can be difficult, because these women have to persuade the sponsors or manufacturers that they are the very best driver available — and a man will very often get that *precious seat.*

"Women have to be more determined than the men," says Heather Bailie. "I absolutely reject the idea of a women's series because these girls want to be taken seriously and treated equally. I got into it through my dad and he was pleased his little girl wanted a go. He never pushed me, but he was always there for me."

Just like the men, all these girls work out, run, swim and *do aerobics at least three times* a week to stay fit and strong. They know they're unlikely ever to face the likes of *Michael* Schumacher or David Coulthard on the F1 track, because at the very top level, strength is an issue and a man will always have an advantage, but they're going to get as high on the motorsport grid as they can.

Rallying is one area where women often excel — in fact Michele Mouton was within a whisker of winning the World Championship in 1982. This *year* the battle is hotting up between Barbara Armstrong and the fabulous Simmonite Sisters. Watch out, too, for Natalie skidding sideways through the forests, as she's just come off the tarmac and has taken to gravel like she was born to it.

Jonathan Zammett, public relations manager for Seat UK, admits that the tour aims to get people to sit in his cars and think about buying one. He says: "Test drives are important, and people will remember it more if they're on a track. It's a very rare opportunity to drive on a race circuit and there's less resistance, less machismo, if the *teacher's a woman.*

If you would like to learn from Seat's A-Team, call the 24-hour Hotline on 0500 *222222* as soon as possible, because places are limited.

World Formula Two rally champion Barbara Armstrong prepares to do her stuff

ALMOST CONVINCED

End of the road for one sexistentialist

Helene Gwynne issued her orders as we approached one of Brands Hatch's more difficult corners: "Third gear — start turning in now!" *writes Stuart Birch.*

I did as I was told. There is no arguing with people like Helene — nor with Amanda or Jane. Their conversation came in staccato bursts, like a well-mannered machine gun: *"Drift to the left, drive to the* right, take third, brake in a straight line, straight ahead now, look for the cone on a late apex. Very smooth. Lovely."

But hang on a minute. I'm a bloke and I've been driving for years. I might have even made the occasional joke about *women drivers* and now here I am on one of the world's most famous race tracks being told what to do by . . . women.

The big problem is that, if I am entirely honest, this trio, each of whom took it in turns to show me the quickest, safest, least dramatic way *around the* circuit, knew what they were talking about. In fact — and I hardly know how to phrase this — *they seemed not to be* merely competent, but to be positively talented at the art of wheel twirling. I said so and got a verbal "nuking": "No, we don't twirl, it's all about smoothness."

Chastened, I kept quiet. Next, they would be telling me they could even reverse a car — not something for *which women drivers are* renowned.

Anyway, I knew a thing or two about these ace drivers who spend much of their time hurtling around tracks and rally stages. Helene also does some photographic modelling, Jane some nanny work, and Amanda is employed in an accounts office. So perhaps they really were only pretending to be racing drivers after all. Weren't *they*?

After many laps being driven, and then *instructe* by these women drivers, realised that they definite were not pretending: th were professionals. M progress around the ra track was being analys and criticised with pr cision.

Smoothness, safety, ar responsibility rather th *sheer speed* are the k points of the team's a vanced driving instructio But for me there was to l *more. Barbara Babbage* worked in a Luton bank f 13 years to pay for n *racing"*) also teaches tl *science of mot* racing. Barba took me rour Brands in 240bhp seve speed Cup Sport 2-litre Se Toledo. Tl words: "Bral now!" kept ta ing over n *brain. After se* eral whirlir laps, I emerg from the car, thorough impressed and — yes reluctantly willing to adr that women drivers a wonderful.

> They are talented in the art of wheel twirling

Seat, though, decid to hammer home tl *lesson, and works r* ly driver, Barbara Arr strong, then gave me tl treatment on a simulat *stage in the Ibiza she h* driven in the RAC Rall "Are you comfortable?," sl asked, as I strapped in her noisy, dusty, raucoı machine. Of course I wasr comfortable — but we we off, stones hammerir against the Ibiza's und side, the car sliding rigl left, right, at daft speed *trees moving towards tl* windscreen, corners a proaching at impossible a gles. At the end of it struggled from the ca vowing never again think, or say, anything ru about women drivers.

Later, as I drove sedate from the track in a Se Cordoba SXE, my bro cooled by its air *conditio*ing, a simple, comfortin fact occurred to me, and broke that promise. It's Ol chaps — none of *ther* reversed.

One of the team's 240bhp seven-speed Cupra Sport 2-litre Toledo demonstrators

Jeepster hankers for a Mustang sally

Chrysler Jeep Imports boss Richard Mackay tells **Sue Baker** of his passion for 1960s American icons

Mackay with his 1966 V8 Ford Mustang: sadly his family don't see the attraction

You would expect to hear the man who is managing director of Chrysler Jeep Imports enthusing about American cars. But when he waxes lyrical about his metallic green V8 *dream machine, it* is not what you think.

As a teenager growing up in 1960s Lancashire, Richard Mackay espoused the American dream through a fondness for Stateside rock'n'roll and a fascination with V8 muscle cars like the Ford Mustang.

But now that he owns one, deliberately choosing a 31-*year-old four-seater to enable* him to share a bit of California-style fresh air motoring with his family, his two teenaged children rarely want to travel in it.

So Mackay, whose motor *industry career has included* spells with Renault, Daihatsu and Alfa Romeo before masterminding the launch of Jeep on the British market, enjoys the Mustang on lone outings of nostalgic escapism.

How did you first learn to drive?

My driving life began in Leeds. The first first car that I owned that worked was a *Singer 4AB Roadster, which I* shared with a mate. It was always on L-plates as we both had provisional licences and only drove it when accompanied by full-licence holders, preferably girlfriends. BSM came to the rescue and I actually passed my test on a MkI Cortina.

What was the first car you owned?

The Singer, which was bought for £15 and if memory serves me right, sold for £20. It was a bright red, four-seater convert*ible and the windscreen used* to fold flat. I loved it.

What car do you drive now, and why?

The Jeep Grand Cherokee V8. Although it goes with the job, *I* love the car — it's very smooth, very powerful and with loads of image.

What is your most hated car?

STEERING COLUMN

I don't think I've ever hated any car. They have been my livelihood and passion for too long.

What is your dream car?

A Ferrari 275 GTB4. I can't possibly afford one, but to me *it's the ultimate. Tremendous* looks, tremendous performance, all with a wonderful badge.

What is your worst habit in the car?

Shouting on my hands-free car telephone because I don't think people can hear me properly — this is my secretary's view as well.

***What infuriates you most* about other drivers?**

It maddens me when other drivers don't adequately indicate their intentions and also when anybody throws rubbish *out of a car.*

What is the most unusual thing you have ever done in your car?

I drove a Triumph Herald into and through the door of the service manager's office in a garage where I worked when I was much younger. I hit the wrong pedal. The event caused a great deal of noise, dust and confusion. Worst of all, the owner was sitting inside the office at the time and was not amused.

***Have you ever had points on* your licence?**

Six points, for speeding, but it's all clear now.

What do you listen to in your car?

Really good rock'n'roll music. Particular favourites are Little Richard, Chuck Berry and Status Quo.

If you were the Secretary State for Transport, what the first thing you would

I would pass Draconian n sures punishing all vehi *that produce appalling e* sions and I would also in on immediate attention b brought to bear to finish *roadworks* currently b performed on the M23/M junction north of Gatv airport.

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***How and why did you bu* your Ford Mustang?**

I bought the Mustang American Independence c 1989. I love the colour, shape and the noise, and hate the fact that I don't ge use it more. It's a meta green convertible model wi 210 brake *horsepower V8* gine, automatic gearbox, p er steering and power hoo

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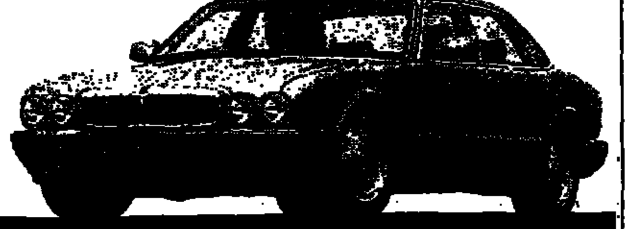

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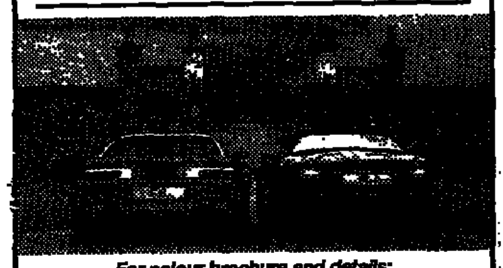

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■ MANY MOTORISTS don't realise how much they could save on insurance premiums by taking simple precautions to *prevent theft, doing a bit of* extra driver training or just keeping their car in a garage, says the Touchline insurance group.

By passing the Institute of Advanced Motorists' test, Touchline policyholders get an automatic 10 per cent reduction in premiums while fitting a *Thatcham-approved* security device attracts a 15 per cent reduction, says Touchline. A voluntary excess of just £50 for accidental damage is another way of keeping costs down. Similar reductions are available from other insurers.

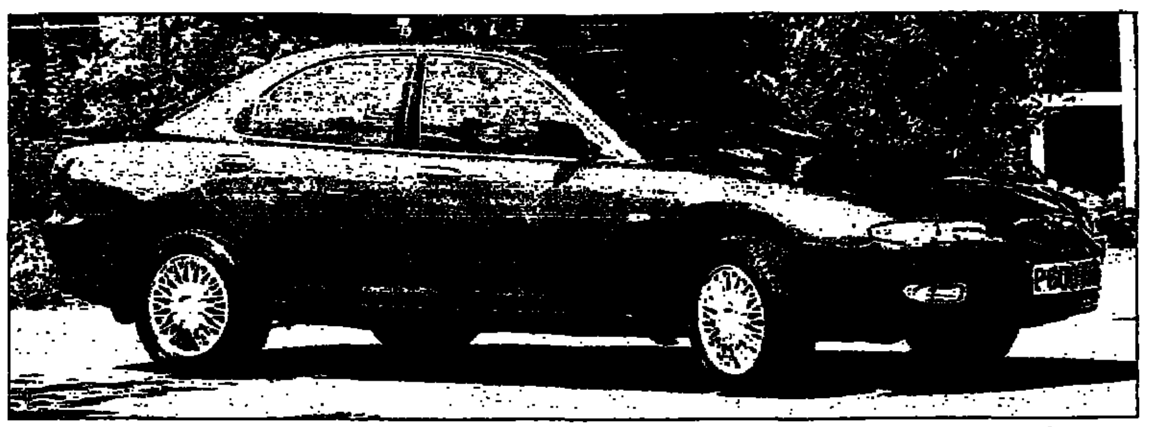
■ **IT'S ONE OF *the most* macho cars on the road in the United States and it goes on sale here this month. The eight-litre Chrysler Viper GTS coupé comes in only one colour: metallic blue, with double white stripes running from front to rear. It combines *the raw power of the* original Viper roadster with refinements such as air conditioning and a roof. On-the-road price is £68,800. The bad news is that only 15 of these 177mph coupés will be imported this year and 11 of them have already been sold.**

■ MORE THAN 100 Jaguars and Daimlers will be gathering in the Guildhall Square at Portsmouth, Hampshire, on the evening of May 23 for the start of the *Entente Cordiale* Normandy rally. Entries are still open to owners of Jaguars old and new for the event, which lasts until May 27 and is organised by *Jaguar World* magazine. Details can be obtained from 0181-658 3531.

Magic motor beats the bland

Alan Copps drives Mazda's Xedos

ROADTEST



Smooth styling is no head-turner, but the refined, frugal V6 provides a much-needed touch of class

From the outside there is nothing remarkable about the Mazda Xedos 6. It's a nice smooth shape, neat but the styling is no head-turner, like a lot of cars on the road.

Inside it's soundly finished, well-equipped and carefully thought out. It comes with a three-year or 60,000-mile warranty and promises the level of reliability and build quality we have come to expect from Japanese-made cars.

But when you start up the V6 engine you realise this is something more than another bland "get you from A to B in comfort" car. The V6 engine is by far its best feature. It produces 141bhp and takes the car *from 0 to* 62mph *in just 9.4* seconds, competitive but not outstanding in a class where rivals include the BMW 3-Series. But it does so with real smoothness and refinement. There's no fuss, no boy-racer type noises, as there are in some of the more obviously sporty versions of its competitors. The unit just provides power *in an entirely predictable* pattern, which is exactly what you want of an engine, especially when overtaking.

Mazda says that the car is selling well against rivals like the BMW, the Rover 600 and the Honda Accord. But somehow the Xedos doesn't capture the imagination in the same way as a 3-Series, despite the fact that the majority of British buyers probably identify Mazda most with the sexy *little MX5* sports car.

Where it does score is on price. The Xedos 6 Sport version starts at just under £20,000 and for that you get a lot of car as well as a lot of warranty. Alloy wheels, electric windows and sunroof are standard on all cars, even the base-model four-cyclinder version, which is priced at under £17,000.

The power-assisted steering has engine-speed sensing so it automatically gives the driver more help at low speeds for manouevring and parking. Anti-lock braking is stan*dard as is an engine immobiliser and* remote-controlled central locking with a built-in feature that prevents its code from being "grabbed".

The other great virtue of the engine must be one of the car's best selling *points. For despite the performance* that it offers, the V6 is a frugal unit; Mazda claims up to 47mpg at a constant 56mph and nearly 27mpg around town.

MAZDA XEDOS M5 SPORT

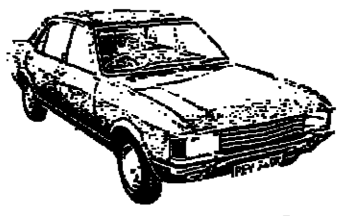
Engine: Two-litre 24-valve, V6 giving 141bhp at 6,000rpm.
Transmission: Five-speed manual or four-speed auto.
Performance: 0-62mph in 9.4 seconds. Max speed 133mph.
Economy: *Urban 26.9mpg; constant 56mph, 47.1mpg; constant* 75mph, 37.7mpg.
Equipment: Electric windows, mirrors and sunroof. Height-adjustable driver's seat, 60/40 split rear seat, RDS radio/cassette, alarm/immobiliser, anti-lock brakes.
Price: £19,590 on the road.

Sweeney motor's 25-year blag

■ NISSAN may have spoofed *The Sweeney* for its latest Almera TV advert but it knows the world remembers that Jack Regan and George Carter drove a MkI Ford Granada, launched 25 years ago this month, *Russell Hayes writes.*

The name went in 1995, but *today's Ford Scorpio started life as* a Granny, and an early Granada is now a sought-after item.

Riding the wave of 1970s cool, Nissan launched the ad by showing the 1976 film, *Sweeney!* Says TBWA account director Philip Holliday, "Out goes the Granada, in goes Nissan. The car was *always essential to the storyline".*



Granada: now sought-after

Coppers, villains and reps all loved the 1972-1977 Granada. It was front-engined, rear-wheel drive, and with three litres of V6 engine, a Granny provided the option of going round corners and *wet roundabouts sideways.*

FORECOURT

■ THE TOYOTA COROLLA, a car well known for its reliability and excellent build quality, has long been a firm favourite with the used-car-buying public, reports *CAP Black Book.*

The Corolla (1987-92) also keeps its value very well, and even high *mileage cars tend not to look their* age, *writes Vaughan Freeman.*

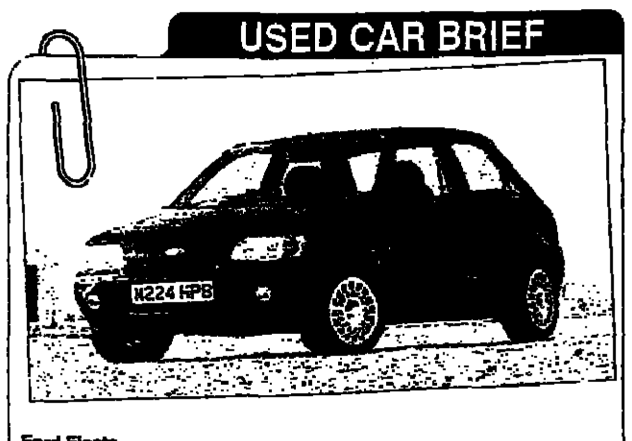
Best buy for the second-hand customer is the 1.3-litre GL five-door, and for a 1992 K-reg example with average mileage, expect to pay around £5,500. The Corolla has one serious problem: it has earned an unwanted reputation as *an "old man's" car.*

Avoid cars with GTi or Executive badges. Corollas need to be *bought with a full service history.* Beware gearbox whine.

■THE SUZUKI VITARA three-door still rates as an automotive fashion accessory, although it is also, within its limits, a capable off-roader. Insurance, at group seven for all models, is low. The *Vitara enjoys good build-quality* but, like most soft-top models at the moment, second-hand values of late-plate models are suffering.

Even so, the best value-for-money buy is any Vitara built between early 1989 and up to late 1994. Expect to pay around £5,000 for an average-mileage 1990 H-reg *JLX hard-top* Vitara.

USED CAR BRIEF



Ford Fiesta
A radical *overhaul* of the Ford Fiesta two years ago revolutionised Britain's favourite small car. First launched in 1976, the Fiesta has always been popular, but the new-look version added drivability and fun to its basic merits of economical motoring. The range of three and five-door hatches is huge, with 1-litre, 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 and 1.8 petrol *engines as well as 1.8-litre diesel*

✓ **GOOD NEWS**
The range is huge and *the choice impressive,* parts are plentiful and cheap and servicing through the Ford *network* of nearly 1,000 dealers is economical and convenient. The Fiesta is as easy to sell as it is to buy while build quality is generally good

⊘ **BAD NEWS**
Cars without power *steering* can make heavy weather of parking and ride too can be harsh. Exciting the Fiesta is not, except in RS guise, and with more than two million sold in the UK since launch, the Fiesta is far from a rare sight on the roads

LOOK FOR
Latest Fiestas with new Zetec 1.25-litre engine which helped revolutionise the car, giving surprising pep as well as 40mpg for a meaty 75bhp. Newer car also benefits from a far airier and roomier feel to the interior which, in the Ghia versions, can also boast air conditioning and leather trim

✋ **AVOID**
Diesels without power steering and performance cars, such as the XR2i which are likely to have been used and abused and will push up your *insurance* premiums. Older cars with five-digit odometers can hide true and much higher mileages

REPLACEMENT PARTS
(Prices include VAT): clutch £90; full exhaust £95; catalytic converter £200; front brakepads (pair) £45; alternator (exchange) £150; front damper £65; rear damper £60; starter motor £165; electric window motor £100

△ **SAFETY RATING**
The Department of Transport gives the Ford Fiesta an average safety ranking, alongside the Fiat Uno and Renault 5, but behind the Renault Clio and Peugeot 206

☂ **INSURANCE**
Cover from AA Insurance (0800 444777) on a 1993 1.3 Ghia costs a 55-year-old professional, male or female, living in Winchester with full no claims, £152 annually fully comprehensive. A 22-year-old male, with one year no claims in south London pays £775, and a female £628

£ **PRICES**
Pre-1990 Fiestas can be bought for under £2,000. Expect to pay £3,500 for a 1.1 LX three-door, £5,000 for a 1993 K-reg 1.3 Ghia CFi five-door, £7,700 for the 1995 N-reg 1.25 LX three-door, £7,250 for a 1996 N-reg 1.3 EFi LX five door and £7,150 for a 1995 N-reg 1.8 diesel Encore three-door

OVERALL
For fairly mundane, middle of the road motoring on a budget there are few cars that do it better than the Fiesta. It does everything that Henry Ford wanted of his cars, offering affordable personal transport to everyone, except that nowadays the choice of colour is a little wider

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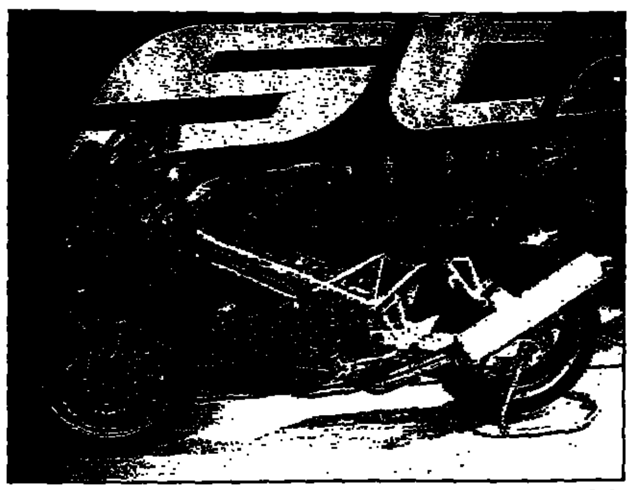
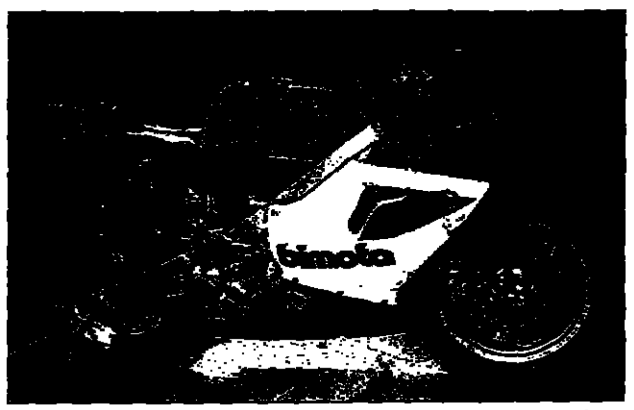
Famous names lead Italy's renaissance

Ducati's new sports-tourer shows Latin bikes are now back, **Roland Brown** says



Ducati's 944cc V-twin ST2 is the first major new model to emerge from the firm's Bologna factory in three years



Due for release this year, Bimota's V-Due is powered by a revolutionary clean-burning 500cc two-stroke engine

Laverda failed despite 1970s superbikes such as the Jota triple. Now the revitalised firm's new twin-cylinder range includes this 650cc Ghost

The world's motorcycle press has been gathering at Jerez for the launch of a new superbike. There is nothing unusual about that — Japanese manufacturers have unveiled bikes in sunny southern Spain so frequently that many journalists could act as guides at the customary viewings of sherry bodegas and dancing horses. But this launch is different: the bike is not from Japan but from Italy.

The machine is the ST2 sports-tourer, Ducati's first truly new model since the stunning 916 three years ago. And behind the Bologna firm's decision to splash out on its first launch on foreign soil is a growing confidence from not just Ducati but the whole Italian industry.

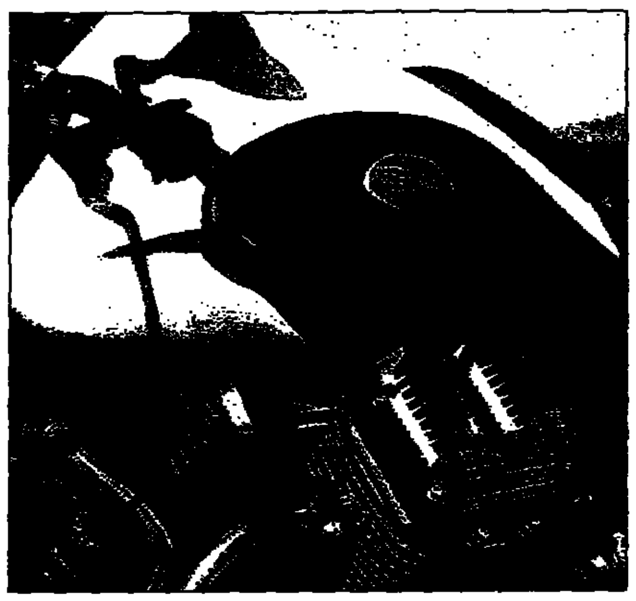
Many of two-wheeled history's great marques are Italian. Gilera, MV Agusta and Moto Guzzi were giants in the 1950s; Laverda, Ducati and Bimota made their mark more recently. But a few years ago the first two were gone and the rest were struggling, victims of Japanese success and their own problems.

Suddenly, though, the Italian industry is roaring back. Leading the charge is Moto Guzzi, once the country's largest bike firm. After going bust in 1966, Guzzi was run for two decades by car baron Alejandro De Tomaso, who failed to supply the finance needed to keep Guzzi's V-twins competitive.

In 1994 De Tomaso relinquished control to a Milan-based merchant bank, which appointed bike enthusiast and former banker Arnolfo Sacchi as the new managing director. Sacchi aims to increase the 1993 production total of 3,000 bikes to 20,000 by the year 2001. So far he is on target. Guzzi built more than 6,000 machines last year and the 1997 total will be higher — aided by new models including the striking Centauro roadster and the roadburning 1100 Sport Injection.

In contrast, Ducati's recent problem has not been lack of competitive machines — the 916 remains arguably the world's most exciting sportster — but the factory's inability to produce them, thanks to the Cagiva group's huge debt. Last summer that was relieved when Cagiva sold 51 per cent of its stake in Ducati. The ST2, a 944cc sports-tourer, will be built on a new production line at the Bologna factory, whose 1997 output is scheduled to increase sharply to almost 30,000 machines.

Laverda's mighty 1,000cc Jota triple was the fastest superbike on the roads in the mid 1970s But financial failures and failed recoveries followed — until three years ago Laverda was bought by Francesco Tognon, a bike-mad local businessman, who has succeeded in reviving its fortunes. Laverda has developed a series of twin-cylinder machines based on former models, and later this year will launch its most promising bike yet: a sleek sportster called simply the 750.



Powerful 992cc Moto Guzzi Centauro V-twin was the first model developed by the firm's new management

Bimota has remained in business during the last two decades, but the tiny Rimini company — famed for its exclusive, hand-assembled sports machines — has had serious problems too.

Five years ago Bimota built just 500 bikes, which sold for little profit despite high prices. Since the arrival of new managing director Walter Martini in 1993, Bimota has trebled production. And it has not lost its edge: this year's most significant machine is Bimota's V-Due, powered by a "clean-burning" 500cc two-stroke engine.

Discussion of revivals should not exclude Aprilia, which in recent years has won numerous road-race world titles and seen production and profits increase dramatically.

Nor have there been serious problems to overcome at thriving Piaggio, which is by far Europe's largest producer of powered two-wheelers, albeit scooters. But Piaggio owns Gilera, one of the great names of Italian motorcycling history, and saddened many enthusiasts when it closed its ailing factory in 1993.

The Gilera name is now used only for scooters — as is that of Benelli, another marque that has won world titles, and which built a glamorous six-cylinder 750cc superbike in the 1970s before going bust. Benelli reappeared in January with a 50cc scooter, amid rumours that it is developing a new 900cc superbike. Given the Italian boom such a dramatic return would not be surprising.

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Mercedes launches the car so smart you no longer need a back-seat driver, reports **Vaughan Freeman**

E-Class swot with all the answers

MERCEDES-BENZ E-CLASS

Engine: V6 18-valve 3.2-litre petrol producing 224bhp at 5600rpm through five-speed automatic transmission.

Performance: Top speed 150mph, 0-60mph in less than 8 seconds.

Economy: 18.3mpg in town, 37.7mpg out of town, 27.4mpg overall.

Equipment: Radio, Brake Assist, anti-lock braking, airbags for driver and front-seat passenger, seatbelt pre-tensioners, side airbags, child-seat recognition (this identifies when a child seat is in the front passenger seat and disarms the airbag which might otherwise cause injury in an accident).

Price: £40,000 (ESP option £846 extra).

ROADTEST

If the new Mercedes E-Class were a schoolboy, it would be one of those clever-clogs who always does their homework, knows all the answers, and brings an apple for teacher.

Loaded with technology, the E-Class, which goes on sale this month seems, like the classroom swot, to have most of the answers.

Strangely, it has taken Mercedes more than a century to answer one of the most basic questions posed by customers; after more than a hundred years in business, Mercedes-Benz has finally provided a radio as standard.

It has also done away with that irritating piece of pocket-tearing technology, the car key. Instead, drivers gets a wedge-shaped piece of technology known as the ELCODE, which uses radio and infra-red beams to chat to the car's computer brain.

ELCODE (Electronic Code System) allows owners to unlock just one door, all the doors, or doors, windows and sunroof, from a distance so that the car can be cooled down on hot days before climbing in. And it makes a serious stab at trying to put car thieves out of business.

When the wedge is inserted into the ignition slot, the car is able to interrogate it to make sure it is the right one before the engine is started. The key and car even play a high-tech version of *University Challenge*, and set each other advanced mathematical problems which must be answered correctly before the car agrees to start. All of this takes just half a second from the moment the key has been inserted into the ignition slot.

While ELCODE will do much to thwart the thief, the E-Class also features the new Brake Assist System as standard, which recognises when the driver is braking for an emergency and applies full braking pressure to reduce braking distances by up to 45 per cent.

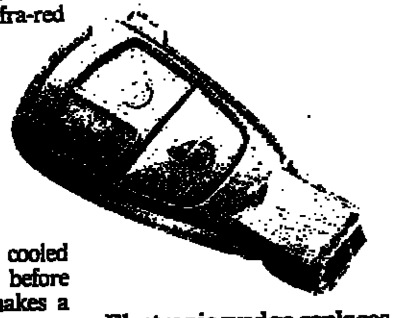
Brake Assist is supported by the Electronic Stability Programme, which allows drivers whose ability falls far short of their ego, to drive safely.

The ESP's on-board sensors constantly monitor the car's speed and direction; when it detects that the car is, for example, going into a corner too quickly or starting to skid, it automatically reduces power to the engine or applies the brakes to one or more wheels, overriding what the driver is doing. The system, which I tried on the ice and snow of mountainous roads in Austria, is quite extraordinary.

Since the car does not know whether or not the driver is on a cliff edge when he is about to lose control, the system assumes the worst and kicks in abruptly. But it works incredibly well, stopping skids and slides on snow which, without ESP, would have had the car pirouetting out of control.

Head of E-Class development, Dr Bernd Harloff says: "With ESP, sensors register the speed of the wheels and the steering angle, as well as the yawing movement of the vehicle, plus lateral acceleration and brake pressure.

"A microcomputer uses this data to compute continuously the maximum permissible speed for the selected driving direction, and corrects driving errors and skidding and sliding tendencies due to icy or wet conditions, loose chippings or other adverse conditions in which the driver would normally have a great deal of trouble keeping his vehicle on course."



Electronic wedge replaces ignition key — and talks to the car's security system

Though the E-Class is loaded with systems and initials, the key to the car is the new 2.8-litre and 3.2-litre V6 petrol engines, which improve fuel consumption by up to 13 per cent and double the normal 9,000-mile service intervals. The platinum spark plugs (there are two to each cylinder), only need to be changed every 60,000km.

The car feels completely secure on the move, and the V6 engine, 50kg lighter than current E-Class engines, is smoothly unobtrusive and matched to the automatic transmission. It makes for relaxed motoring — even when hopelessly lost on a test drive, the ease of driving, the unflustered V6 engine and automatic gearbox combination provided a soothing antidote for escalating "where-are-we" panic.

DR DASHBOARD

Q So these intelligent brakes think more quickly than a driver. What about the one behind in the banger which has just scraped its MoT?

A He shouldn't be driving too close. The Highway Code stopping distances are based on an average car and average driver. The average car on Britain's roads is about seven years old.

Q That means that most of us don't have a cat in hell's chance of stopping as quickly as an E-Class. Would my insurance company understand if I hit the back of one in an emergency stop?

A There's absolutely no reason why they should. The distance between cars has to be based on how long it might take the following car to stop. The stopping power of the car in front is immaterial. You need to be able to brake to a standstill even if the car in front stops dead.

Q But whenever I try leaving that sort of gap on the motorway someone dives into it. What should I do?

A Drop back. We're talking about safety here, not about feeling hard done by because others want to drive dangerously. Tailgating is one of the worst habits among British drivers. Look at the carnage in the fog last month. In America, driving too close is a specific offence.

Q So instead of making cars brake more quickly, why don't they try to keep cars the right distance apart?

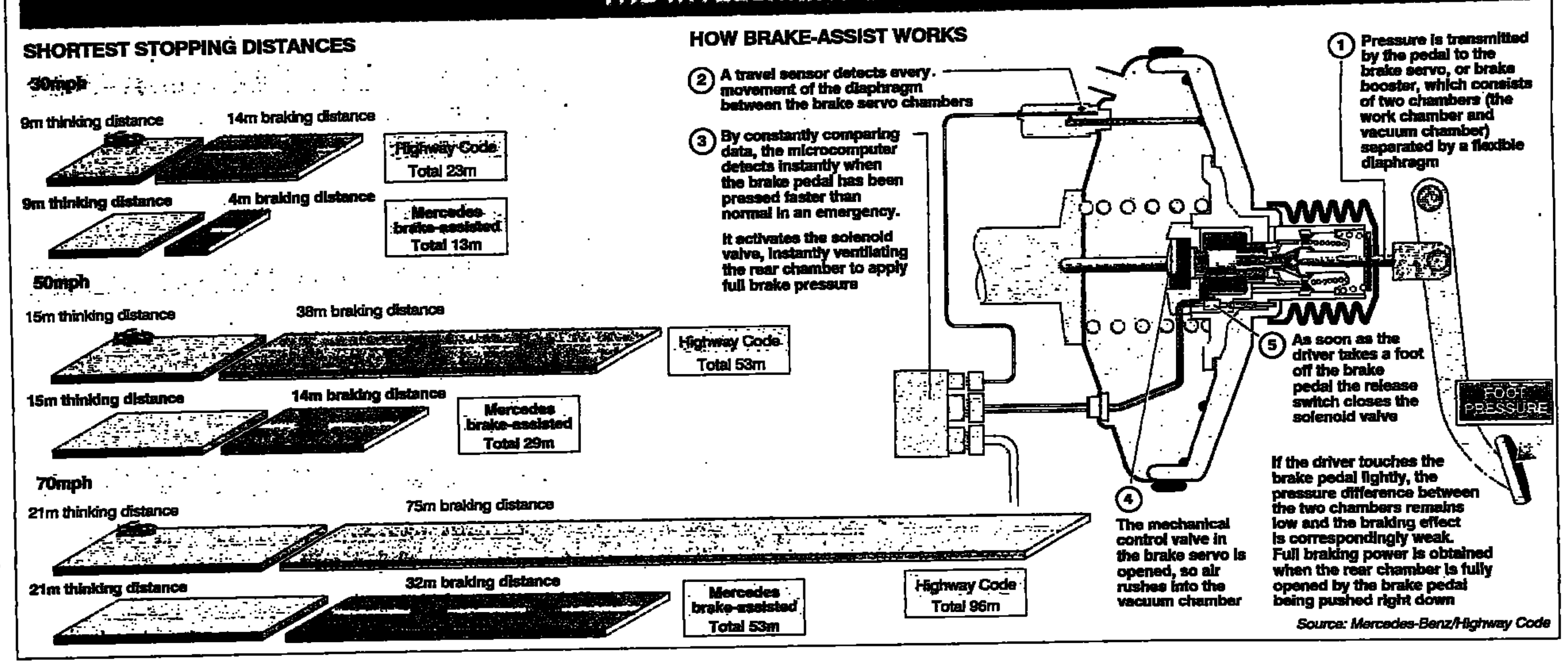
A Funny you should ask that. The Prometheus project, which is backed by many major manufacturers, is already working on a collision-avoidance system.

Q You mean it stops you from getting too close to the car in front?

A Precisely. It uses a form of radar which measures the distance between vehicles. If it senses the gap closing it will either apply the brakes or lift the throttle automatically to maintain a safe distance. No one is saying how soon it will appear on a production car, but given the speed at which technology moves, watch this space.

New E-Class keeps over-enthusiastic drivers off skid row with an intelligent system of sensors that applies the brakes before the car is cornered too fast for the conditions

THE INTELLIGENT BRAKE


SHORTEST STOPPING DISTANCES
30mph
9m thinking distance
14m braking distance
Highway Code Total 23m
9m thinking distance
4m braking distance
Mercedes brake-assisted Total 13m
50mph
15m thinking distance
38m braking distance
Highway Code Total 53m
15m thinking distance
14m braking distance
Mercedes brake-assisted Total 29m
70mph
21m thinking distance
75m braking distance
21m thinking distance
32m braking distance
Mercedes brake-assisted Total 53m
Highway Code Total 96m
HOW BRAKE-ASSIST WORKS
① Pressure is transmitted by the pedal to the brake servo, or brake booster, which consists of two chambers (the work chamber and vacuum chamber) separated by a flexible diaphragm
② A travel sensor detects every movement of the diaphragm between the brake servo chambers
③ By constantly comparing data, the microcomputer detects instantly when the brake pedal has been pressed faster than normal in an emergency.
It activates the solenoid valve, instantly ventilating the rear chamber to apply full brake pressure
④ The mechanical control valve in the brake servo is opened, so air rushes into the vacuum chamber
⑤ As soon as the driver takes a foot off the brake pedal the release switch closes the solenoid valve
FOOT PRESSURE
If the driver touches the brake pedal lightly, the pressure difference between the two chambers remains low and the braking effect is correspondingly weak. Full braking power is obtained when the rear chamber is fully opened by the brake pedal being pushed right down

Source: Mercedes-Benz/Highway Code

Vaughan Freeman on Mercedes' new state-of-the-art stopper

For crises: an even brake

A recipe for countless rear-end shunts it might seem, but Mercedes-Benz insists that its new device, which gives motorists the reactions of a jet-fighter pilot, is not part of a plot to boost sales of their rear bumpers and boot lids.

Drivers of the new E-Class saloon from Mercedes will be able to stop faster than anyone else on the road thanks to its Brake Assist System. Mercedes claims the system reduces braking distances by up to 45 per cent to ensure that the child, dog or cat that steps out unexpectedly in front of you has a far better chance of surviving.

The problem is, what happens to the drivers behind?

The German manufacturer came up with the idea after research found that in 90 per cent of emergencies, when the brakes had to be applied fast, hard and consistently, drivers either did not hit the brakes hard enough, did not keep the pressure on for long enough, or were hesitant about their braking.

Dr Bernd Harloff, head of E-Class development, says: "We are the first manufacturer in the world to use the Brake Assist System, which cuts emergency braking distances by up to 45 per cent from a speed of 100kph (62mph).

"Brake Assist goes into action when the driver steps on the brake pedal too hesitantly or too gently in a critical situation. In this event the maximum brake power boost is developed automatically in fractions of a second."

By continually examining data from the system's pedal-travel sensor, Brake Assist is able to recognise when the brake pedal is operated at a speed which exceeds the normal limits. It then concludes that an emergency braking situation has arisen and assists the driver in the proposed emergency stop.

"Our scientists found that almost all drivers step on the brake unusually quickly when a critical situation arises," says Dr Harloff.

In effect, the system identifies an emergency by "learning" the driver's usual driving habits, and reacts when in an emergency the brake pedal is, understandably, pressed much faster than usual.

Brake Assist measures the speed at which the brake pedal is depressed using a pedal-travel sensor which monitors every use of the brake pedal. When the pedal is pressed quickly enough to indicate an emergency, a solenoid valve is triggered which ventilates one of the chambers in the brake booster and full brake pressure is instantly applied.

In practice, when testing the system in rainy and near freezing conditions, BAS responds in an unfussed manner. In non-emergency conditions, without the instantaneous surge of adrenalin that an impending crash triggers, it is very difficult to make the Brake Assist kick in since the braking foot seems unable to move fast enough.

Given the right simulated emergency conditions however, with a barrier dropped in front of the car without warning on a test strip, BAS comes to the rescue without any major alarm as it intervenes.

What is apparent is the noticeably reduced stopping distance, and at 100kph (62mph) the the car takes as little as 40 metres to come to a halt — close to half the Highway Code's 73 metres shortest braking distance for a 60mph stop.

Normally, such rapid braking would mean an instant skid, but as well as Brake Assist as standard on the E-Class, anti-lock braking is provided, which prevents skids and ensures that the car can still be steered without loss of control.

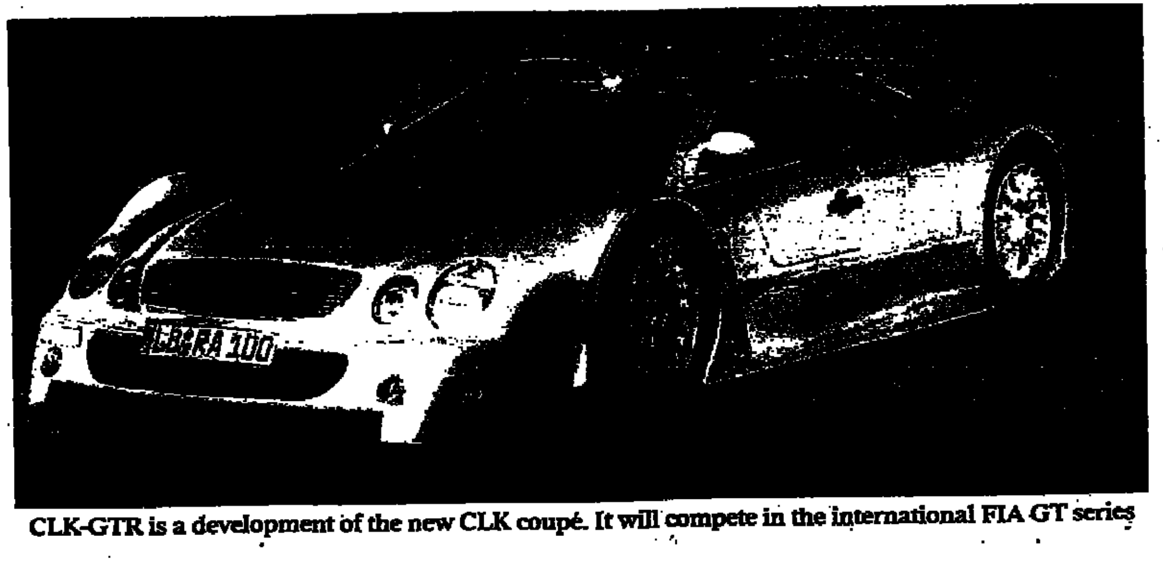
In the long run, as well as fitting the system to other cars in its range, Mercedes-Benz intends to licence BAS so that it will be available to other manufacturers.

But if your car is the one stopping quickest in the M25's outside lane in an emergency, doesn't that mean that everyone behind will end up smashing into your blazing brake lights?

Mercedes-Benz spokesman John Evans says not: "When disc brakes were first introduced, those cars which were the first to be fitted with them were able to stop more quickly than those fitted with drum brakes, and when anti-lock braking systems were first fitted, ABS cars could stop faster.

"The number of rear-end crashes did not soar when disc brakes were introduced, but what they did offer when they were first introduced was massively shorter stopping distances," argues Evans.

"We do not envisage a problem of numerous rear-end collisions with Brake Assist. What we will have is E-Class drivers and, of course, other road users, who will be much safer, and able to stop more quickly."



CLK-GTR is a development of the new CLK coupé. It will compete in the international FIA GT series

MERCEDES-BENZ LAUNCHES GT RACER

The revival of GT racing, one of the most spectacular forms of motorsport, continues apace. Most recent entrant is Mercedes-Benz who this week unveiled the CLK-GTR a racing development of the soon-to-be-launched CLK coupé which has been produced in cooperation with the AMG tuning company. It will compete in the new international FIA GT Series for sportscar racing. It carries a 6.9 litre V12 engine producing 560bhp. It has been developed from the plant that powers the company's S-Class limousine in conjunction with the British-based Ilmor company, which also provides the Mercedes engines for McLaren Formula One cars.

The car had its first test last week, mainly in the hands of Bernd Schneider, the 1995 German Touring Car champion, and is said to have met all performance targets. It is likely to make its race debut at the first FIA GT meeting at Hockenheim, Germany next weekend. The car is in the tradition of the famous gull-wing Mercedes 300SL, which dominated sports car racing in the 1950s, and will be taking on entries from Porsche, Lotus, Ferrari, Nissan and others. To qualify for the international series the company has to make at least one road-going car of the same design. The chances are it will make a limited series of ten or 50, and to comply with regulations they will have to cost less than $1 million each.

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93L PASSAT GL 16V ESTATE, Royal Blue, 17,000 miles, 2 Owners, FSH
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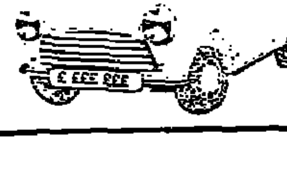

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482 TMT
TPO 940
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K4 RLA
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1 SGG
2 SJ
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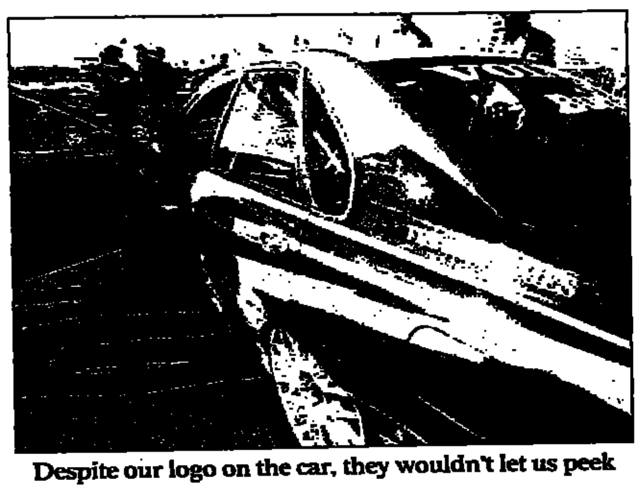
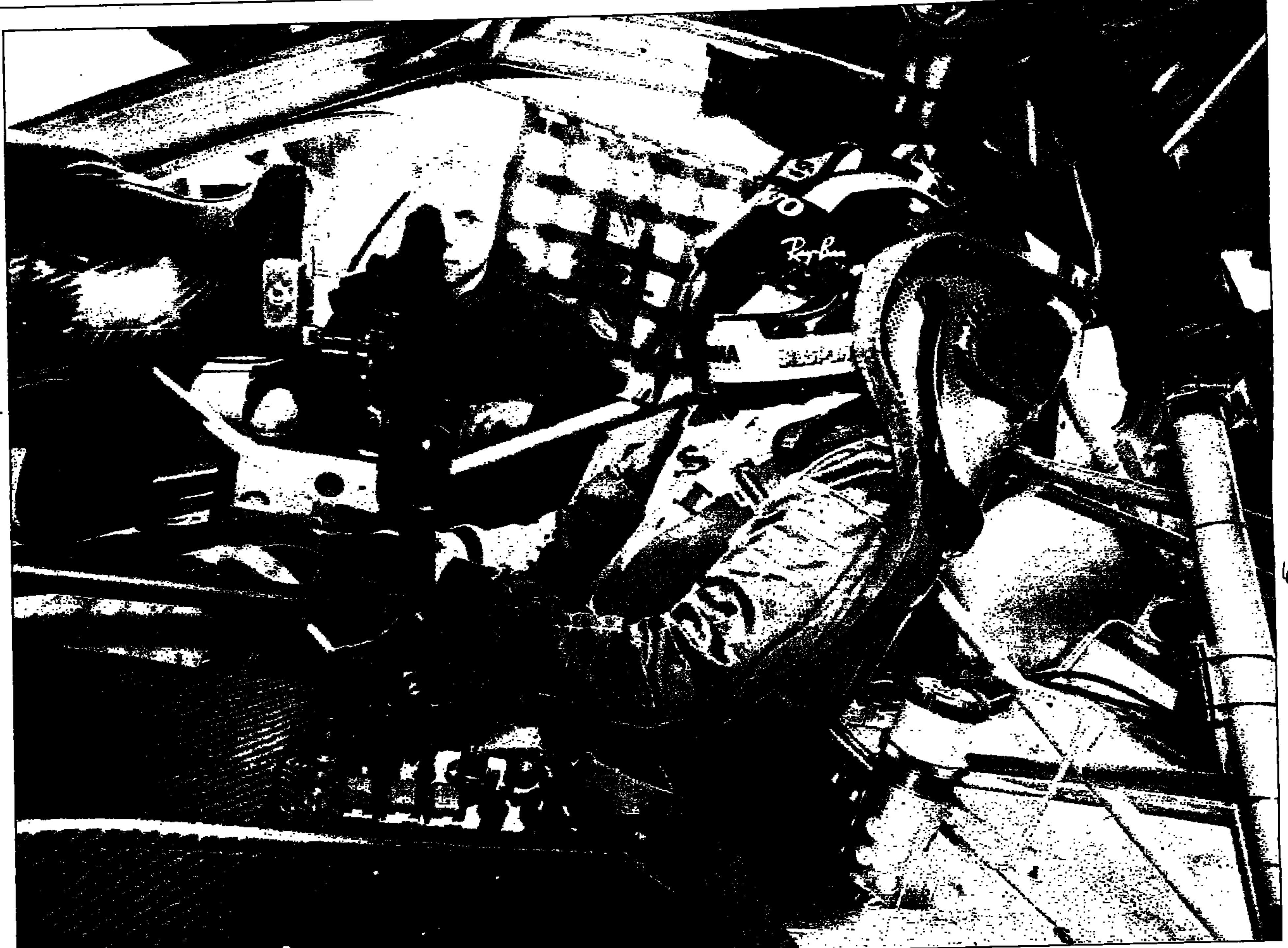
TLG 1
911 TON
1 TY

Kevin Eason on our BTCC team's strong start — now they just need better luck, more grip and less debris

'The first two races showed how good the Volvos looked'



Despite our logo on the car, they wouldn't let us peek



DOUG MARKE/PAGE ONE

TWR Volvo team driver Kelvin Burt readies for the race. Interior shows how his Volvo is no family saloon — the engine tuning includes tricks that are kept strictly secret

This will do nothing to convince customers about Volvo's service schedules: for when Rickard Rydell needed a new engine in his S40, it took the mechanics minutes instead of days.

Rydell discovered that the slings and debris of outrageous fortune can cost dear in motor racing on his first outing in the British Touring Car Championship for the TWR Volvo team, whose progress is being followed this year by *CAR 97*.

The fabulous Volvo S40s started the weekend looking unbeatable with Rydell, the team's lead driver, posting record practice times on the Donington circuit.

On race day though, Rydell and teammate Kelvin Burt discovered just what their Formula One rivals, Williams, had up their sleeves with the Renault Lagunas — which won both the first rounds.

In race one, Rydell was hard on the heels of race leader, Alain Menu, and Renault teammate, Jason Plato, when everything went wrong. Suddenly a secure third place turned to nothing when Plato's Laguna flicked track debris into Rydell's radiator. Half a lap from the finish, Rydell's engine gave up.

That gave the pit crew less than two hours to whip out the remnants of Rydell's race engine and put in another for the second-round race.

Forget the idea that this five-cylinder two-litre is just like the one you have in the family Volvo at home though; the racing S40s have 300bhp available to generate neck-breaking acceleration, thanks to clever tinkering by TWR's engineers. They take a normal family five-cylinder and create a lightweight power pack that generates loads of power but also costs a fortune: nobody could say how much but you wouldn't want to pay the price for your family estate car.

So secret is their tuning trick that even we — *CAR 97*, which has *The Times'* logo on the S40 — were not allowed to see the engine changeover. That is kept strictly under wraps in case of leaks to other teams desperate to replicate Volvo's increasing BTCC success. Instead, the pit garage doors came down while the mechanics worked furiously.

Meanwhile, Kelvin Burt, in the second Volvo, was celebrating third place after Rydell's demise, but complained of a lack of grip that dogged both drivers.

That they should fret: the only worrying was among the rest of the field, for this first BTCC weekend showed how good the Williams-prepared Renaults and TWR Volvos looked against the opposition.

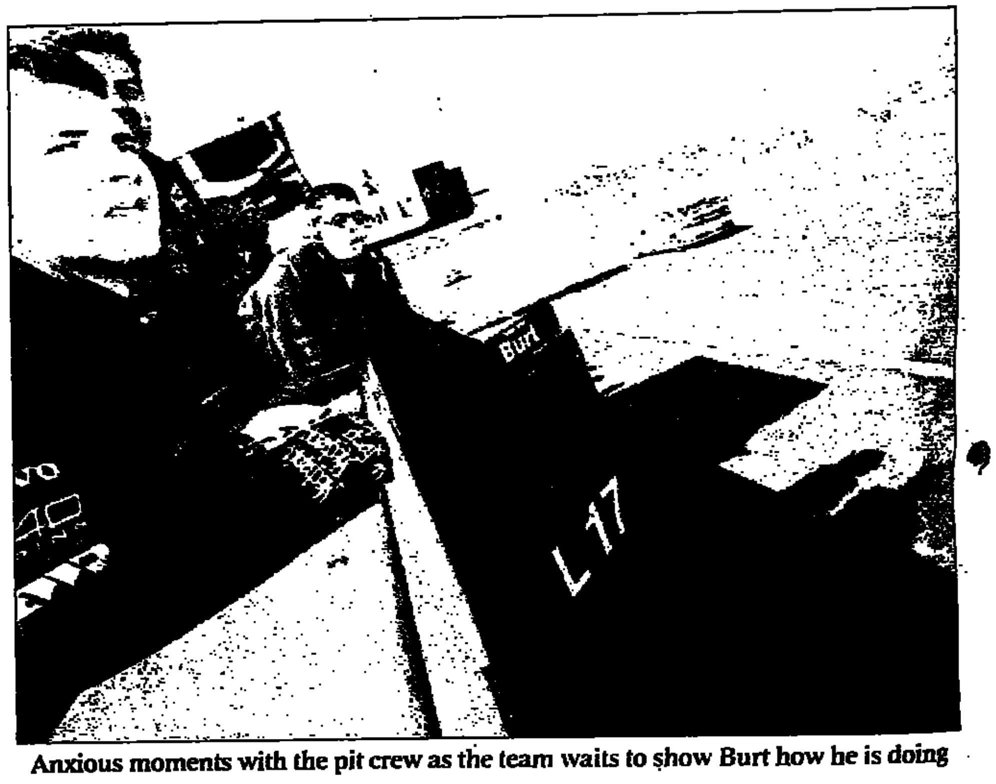
Only Honda's Accords, turned out by Prodrive, the team based in Banbury, Oxfordshire, which makes Colin McRae's Subaru rally car, looked fast enough for a fight.

In the second round, the Renaults and Volvos again tore away from the field, though Jason Plato went off, leaving Rydell to come in three seconds behind Menu. Burt could only manage ninth, still plagued by a lack of grip.

So it is back to the drawing board for TWR's experts, though they believe the next round at Silverstone could tell a much different story. The Volvos are powerful and well-prepared and every race brings a new set of data to tell the engineers where to find another ounce of power.

Then, with a little more luck and less debris, Rydell and Burt could take their first win.

BTCC Drivers' Championship table: 1, Alain Menu, 30 points; 2, Jason Plato, 14; 3, Kelvin Burt, John Bintcliffe (Audi) and Rickard Rydell 12. Manufacturers' table: Renault 30pts; 2, Volvo, 24; 3, Audi, 18; 4, Nissan, 14; 5, Honda, 13. Next race at Silverstone on April 20.



Anxious moments with the pit crew as the team waits to show Burt how he is doing

Volvo's strength shows in Rickard Rydell's grid position, left. Burt takes third prize

£250

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Classic gathering hits the roads

■ ONE OF the widest selections of classic cars to be seen on the roads sets off from Thruxton race circuit near Andover, Hampshire, on Friday April 18 for the Haynes Publishing Two-Day Classic. The 475-mile non-competitive event has attracted a capacity entry of 330 cars for a scenic and historic tour of the West Country. Oldest car in the field is the 1926 Bentley 3-litre of John Bond-Smith from Oxfordshire. At the other end of the field Aston Martin, Ferrari, Porsche, Jaguar and Triumph from the 1970s are all represented. Haynes Motor Museum in Sparkford, Somerset, hosts the Friday overnight stop and displays a fabulous collection of other historic vehicles. Further details from 01963 440804.

■ THE CLOSING date for entries to *The Times* Lease Plan Company Car Driver of the Year competition, our annual search for Britain's best company car driver, has been extended to April 11. Entries are invited from teams of three who drive a company car or other vehicle as part of their remuneration. Entrants must be over 24 and have the backing of their fleet manager. First prize is a trip for two to the Portuguese Grand Prix. Details of regional heats, the Silverstone finals and entry forms can be obtained from Lease Plan 01753 797284.

Classics from the 1920s to the 1970s meet at Thruxton

■ MITSUBISHI has launched the "Campaign for Galant Driving" to coincide with the introduction of its new Galant range. Every Galant buyer or company car driver and partner will be offered a half-day course by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents to learn about the performance of the car and about hazard recognition and driver perception. "It is designed to improve individual driver performance and promote safer driving through practical examples," says Stephen Dixon, managing director.